No. 57.

Dep. March 12 1853

By

Herman Hooker

Publ

LIBRARY OF CONGRESS.

Chap. PS1023 Copyright No. .....

Shelf A13C3 1853

UNITED STATES OF AMERICA.

Catena Dominica.

BY

JOHN HENRY ALEXANDER.

Philadelphia:

HERMAN HOOKER,

Corner of Chestnut and Eighth Streets.

1855.

PS1029
.A19C3
1855

Entered, according to Act of Congress, in the year 1855, by

HERMAN HOOKER,

in the Clerk's Office of the District Court of the United States in and for the Eastern District of Pennsylvania.

PHILADELPHIA:
PRINTED BY KING AND BAIRD,
SANSOM STREET

TO

ALL KIND READERS.

One *evening, as the mellow sun-light slept*
Upon the sward and dyed it green and gold,
While overhead the leaves a murmur kept
And whispered what the oriole had told
His mate, or what the thrush or blue-bird bold
Had carolled to them, in the early day,
Of the far-distant ether, clear and cold,—
Beside an ancient, haunted Elm I lay,
With roving thoughts unsteady as you quivering spray.

Before me floated, then, among the rest,
The shattered army of my youthful Dreams;
Shorn of the pomp that whilome did invest
Their first Aurora-march with conquering gleams:
Ah me! how many a gallant Hope now seems
The pallid ghost of what it used to be —
How many sunk in Acherontian streams,
Never to rise — how many a shield I see
No more, that dazzled erst with gorgeous blazonry!

Then came the pictures blurred and canvass torn
Of deeds (mine own and others') that present
True scenes of what my real Life has borne:
— A sombre shew of learning, strength, mispent,
— A gloomy train of shadows rearward bent,
Beneath the slant rays of a sinking sun,
— A funeral march of figures tremulent,
Whose step no other music hurries on,
Than the dull heart-beats 'neath the haunted Elm, alone.

Wearied with such sad visions, where did blend
A thwarted Future with a wasted Past,
Where Hope grew heavy, when he would ascend,
With such a load of Memories round him cast,—
I longed and prayed for something bright, at last
My thoughts might turn to — something that might be
Unmonotone, yet anchored ever fast
To Truth — the sparkling of an Ocean free,
The same, yet always new in its immensity.

While thus I longed, as if in answer there
(For hearty, healthy strivings, fit success!)
The radiant image of the Church's Year
(That rolls along with years we treasure less,)
Up-rose in long-known, long-prized comeliness,
Linked strangely with scenes that suggested it;
Ever the same, yet varying with the press
Of Joy or Grief, with hues fast-changing lit,
Revolves that Year for all in time and measure fit!

But chiefly, mid the lines of light which show
Its course, I dwelt upon that Sunday-chain
Of golden Truth and Love, let down below, —
Of gracious promises and warnings plain:
Less marked, it may be, than the other train
Of Saintly feasts and week-time Holy-days;
Yet, in its order, bringing back again
More of the lustre of the SAVIOUR'S *ways,*
That all o'er Bethlehem and Joseph's sealed Tomb plays.

Bathed in this lustre, then awhile grew dim
The actual scene that close around me lay; —
Unheard, the mocking-bird's wild, varied hymn
That fitful swelled and sank, now grave, now gay;
Unmarked, the graces of the tremulous spray,
Or melting colors, blending earth and sky;
— I only heeded the sweet, linked display
Of that so luminous Chain which seemed to lie
O'er-arching, in its span, the azure canopy.

And, as I gazed, I could but mark the gleam
That self-supporting, like a diamond's, shone
From each particular link and made it seem,
Itself, the Jewel of the Chain, alone;
Till, looking at the next, I needs must own
My choice disturbed and, in the new-lit blaze,
Found brighter hues or tints more tender grown,
As caught from separate epochs in CHRIST'S *ways,*
His Cradle or His Cross — sad or triumphant days.

All these I saw; — the warning Advent-dawn,
The Paschal-noon with its angelic lyres,
And then, (a week, between, of Sundays drawn)
The evening-glow of Pentecostal fires; —
All these I felt, as clearest sight inspires
A feeling; so that, still while sun-light clung,
Ere Twilight came to watch when Day retires,
Unconscious syllables, together flung,
Began to tell of pictures 'neath the Elm-tree hung!

First Sunday in Advent.

ONCE AND ONCE MORE.

LORD! who as at this time condescended
To visit Earth in great humility;
From all works by which Thou art offended,
Our hearts and homes, O! help Thou us to free:
That both fit may prove
To entertain Thy love
And, not guest-wise only, welcome Thee!

For this holy tide have we been yearning,
(Fit season to begin our mystic Year)
Haply from all 'round the lesson learning,
By our true inner Life to draw more near;
Keeping quick and warm
Thine own implanted germ,
Mid the winter of our world-storms here

Blest, if in our heart of hearts we store them —
The teaching and the thing — that both may grow
Deeper, stronger, for the pressure o'er them;
Till in our measure we may come to know
How all-graciously
Was planned that Mystery,
In one phase of which Thou cam'st below.

Waiting long, the world had looked out for Thee;
Not wholly left, meanwhile, uncomforted:
Ever and anon, a Vision bore Thee
In fitting glory by some prophet's bed;
Bringing music there
So sweet, that its faint air
Now ev'n, in Thy Church, fresh life doth shed!

Then there came a darker time and dreary,
When Faith went unrefreshed by wonted sign;
When of Man's provoking God seemed weary
And suffered pride or worse to soil His shrine;
Till some Maccabee
Rose, now and then, to free
Those who meekly bore all yokes but Thine;

Till at last arrived the moment gracious,
That should the long-expected Presence bring;
Seraphs hymned it, through the empyrean spacious,
Archangels message-bearing stooped the wing,
And the midnight skies
Glowed on the Shepherds' eyes —
Sign of Apostolic heralding!

Ever since, in calmer light and clearer,
(Though all Thy types are not as yet made plain,)
Each return of this day but brings nearer
Thy second coming to the Earth again:
Ere its sun goes down,
Many a soul shall own
Angel-calls to rise and join Thy train.

Still, those calls so soft, like dew-drops gentle,
Man hardly heeds in this world's utter din;
Or, for purpose high, Thou spread'st a mantle
To dull the echoes waking else within;
Making out of this,
A future higher bliss
For the patient, watchful heart to win!

But for such as will not bend nor waken,
Another warning yet remains in store:
Soon the Earth, rocked terribly and shaken,
Preserves no covered place she had before;
Soon, the friendly Night
Burns with intensest light,
Giving hope to hide from Thee no more.

And if erst types, hard and dim, obscurely
Foreshadowed Thine approach in human guise;
And Thy tokens silent, hushed, (though surely)
Marked but a crisis in our inner ties;
Soon, all outward Sign
And Majesty Divine
Will attend our world's last Mysteries!

Saviour! keep us, in that hour of terror,
Safe underneath the Cross, man raised for Thee:
And that we may know it well, O! nearer
Make us, each day like this, its features see:
So, hard-won at last,
We, though all trembling, fast-
Clinging to its gracious foot may be!

Second Sunday in Advent.

THE GLEANING OF THE GRAPES.

"Why, when I looked for blushing, wine-fed grapes,
Are there but thorns?"—so once Thy prophet sung;
So might he now reprove the wayward shapes
Of thanklessness, of sin in heart and tongue,
Half-hid beneath that veil o'er priest and people flung.

So, all the woes his mournful voice proclaimed,
May o'er the Earth awaken righteously;—
The faded flowers—the shadeless heat, untamed
By slightest clouds—the long-lost melody—
The storm and yawning graves o'er darken'd land and sea!

Therefore, O! Guardian of the lonely Vine,
(Thine own loved Church,) we flee to Thee for aid;
Help us to see Thy promised day-spring shine
Upon the covert which Thyself hast made,
By whose green leaves alone, Thine outstretched arm is staid.

We see Thy signs in the decaying year
And coming winter wild; before whose breath,
The tender fig-tree casts its leafets sere,
The shaken olive bows itself to death,
And clouded Heavens look dark upon the Earth beneath!

'Tis Thine own vengeance, O! thou Lord of Hosts,
Against the earth defiled, awakening;
Crushing the haughty looks, the thoughtless boasts
Of those pale prisoners whom Thou wilt bring
Into Thy pit and snare to wait Thy visiting.

For all these signs, Thy virgin-spouse, the Church,
Would, like the Virgin-mother, nearer cling
To Thee and, in Thy word of promise, search,
Read, mark and learn, what she may gladly sing
When faded Winter melts in her sure-coming Spring!

Third Sunday in Advent.

SURE AND NIGH.

Nor by the flowers that gently sank
So lately, in the parched glen;
Not by the purple fruits that drank
The autumn-dews, to ripen then;
Not by each swiftly closing year;
Count we until our Lord be here:

Nor by the tokens that impart
An impulse to the coming end;
The miracles of modern art
That blind men, eyes — lame, strong feet lend;
Like what th' expectant Baptist knew
As pledges of an Advent true:

Nor even by less earthly signs;
The vintage of souls far away,

The gleaming of their length'ning lines
Who come to own the Gospel's sway;
Till Christian Cross and symbols shine
O'er Mahound's crescent, Vishnu's shrine:

Not by all these or more; for still
Our dear-bought hearts at home are cold;
And even now, our half-taught will
Would wander forth, if it were told
Of reeds that syllable the wind;
Some fresher, saving grace to find.

And now ev'n those that claim and wear
A royal Priesthood's priceless pall,
Would to the desert rude repair,
For Fancy's song, or Honor's call;
Where raiment soft or hairy skin,
Alike, their gaze admiring win.

These find Thee not, though long ago
Their childhood's tiny step went forth
At the stern Voice and Baptist-vow:—
Alas, for their devotion's worth!

Still shews the prison of each heart
The damsel's often-pencilled part.

Yet these must find Thee, or in love
  Or wrath, before Thine Advent come;
And soon each lingering one must prove
  The axe laid to his very home.
If line and precept fail to win,
'Tis time a sharper way begin.

Time, *thine,* not ours; Who found it fit
  To vail Thine elder message long
And made Thy prophets utter it
  With stammering lips and other tongue;
In mercy, thus, to seek and try
The readiest for Thy mystery!

He that believes will not make haste;
  Content Thy season best to wait,
He questions not the desert-waste
  If Christ be there, or royal state;
But for his Saviour, (fitter part!)
He opes and searches his own heart.

Not long, though (may be) many an age,
Its unmillenial stream will roll;
Not long, though many a blotted page
Of tears and woe, yet fill the scroll
Of this world-life; ere Thou dost show
Thyself to all the living, now.

And, if not in the majesty
Unbearable of the last Day;
Or if not in the mystery
Of Heavenly love to those that pray;
'T will be with all the helpless dread
That wraps the sinner's narrow bed.

So sure, so nigh! — Make ready, then,
The hearts your SAVIOUR waits to fill
Or crush; that, ere the flowers again
Spread their sweet carpet by each rill,
As fresh, as bright, as soft, be spread
Our Life-flowers for that SAVIOUR's tread!

Fourth Sunday in Advent.

THE VISIBLE TEACHERS.

O! patient wait, and on CHRIST's promise stayed,
Deem not the time delayed
Ere He comes; not, as once, in meek-borne pain,
But now to judge and reign;
O'ershadowing, as some cool, fount-giving Rock,
His wandering, weary flock,
While toppling crags and widening chasms scare
And crush rebellious ones who scorned His word to bear.

His time, His help, in hopeful stillness bide;
Nor dream of other Guide;
Build no fond altar up to human skill
Or science or stern will;
Looking to Egypt, land of portents vast
And mystic learning waste,
As erst the Chosen's more than heathen Night
Spread her dim arms abroad to lean on Pharaoh's might.

But if, more blest, thou tread'st a Christian shrine,
Owning the Power Divine
That haunts it, waiting there for Advent-light
To dawn upon thy sight —
Think not such privilege enough may be:
Since once the Pharisee
Gazing on Abraham with filial pride.
Missed the MESSIAH's self, all radiant by his side.

'Tis true that no proud Hebrew blood sustains
The current in our veins:
But ev'n from stones GOD raises, at CHRIST's claim,
Children to Abraham;
And, in our stonier hearts and hardened path,
He looks but for the faith
Of the Chaldee, t' avouch us, too, the heirs
Of that high blessedness which but the Faithful shares.

Lo! early signed by more than Baptist's hand,
Within His Church we stand;
Whose fretted roof and pillared aisles around
With words of Life resound
From teachers now no more removed for fear
To lonesome crypts and drear

Or darkling corners in some city vast,
Or forests whose gaunt trees their shadows frightful cast.

Secure and calm, our eyes our Teachers see;
And, wheresoe'er we be,
If passion tempts us from the right to stray,
Or to the left-hand way
Our lingering frailties cause us to decline —
A warning Voice Divine,
With Gospel-burden fraught, is near to woo
And whisper: "Here CHRIST trod; here ye must follow too."

So let us follow, in obedient love,
Where we shall shortly prove
An Advent to ourselves, if not to all;
Striving meanwhile, like Paul,
CHRIST undivided in our hearts to keep;
And if we fall asleep
Ere Christmas wakes with angel-melodies,
All nearer float we where its songs of sweet peace rise.

First Sunday after Christmas.

THE CHRIST IN THE TEMPLE.

So young and yet so wise!
So tender and so true!
So bold to handle mysteries!
So clear, to solve them too!—
Thus spake the Rabbin, stern and cold,
What day the wondrous Child his Father's message told!

They cowered before his gaze,
His eyes so grave and bright;
Condemned so long to Evening-haze,
They saw the Evening-light
That failed, alas! for them to show
The new highway wherein the humble safely go.

Forgot, the prophet-tone
That told what Majesty,
Beyond the shrine of Solomon,
In that new House should be;

The Presence from themselves they reft,
Unstriving (Israel-like) till It a blessing left.

Therefore, since Man so willed,
Woke other prescient strains;
O'er chords that gladness might have filled,
A mournful music reigns,
Echoed in that sad Mystery
Where Princes of this world their LORD would crucify!

Do we from such dark scene
Withdraw our shuddering gaze
And fondly think, if we had been
In those Incarnate Days,
We should our privilege have prized
And, in the Temple-child, Messiah recognized? —

O, woful self-deceit!
O, more than Israel blind!
Each day, beneath our very feet,
Such gracious aids we find
As not the seeing, wondering Jew
Or Prophet-king of old or Bard inspired e'er knew!

So, near each faithful heart
Here in his House to day,
CHRIST stands (no more in Childlike part
Except its loving way)
Questioning every doubt and fear
And wisely answering those who will but bend to hear.

Needs but the wish sincere,
Him by our side to bring;
Unstopped by Him the heavy ear,
The dumb throat taught to sing,
While flowers of Love and Peace will bless
The Desert of the heart, the soul's drear wilderness!

O, heavier far (believe)
If blind, *our* sin and woe
Than *theirs* who failed once to receive
The Child in mortal show!
Then ope each bosom to enshrine,
In Faith's devoutest pomp, the PRESENCE all Divine!

Second Sunday after Christmas.

THE EVERGREENS.

Lo mid the Evergreens we sit,
— Of thy fast word, an emblem fit —
Watching Thy purpose high
And longing for each fleeting Year
Some promised grace to bring, more dear
Than aught that is gone by.

For so each year is ushered in
By springing hopes that Heaven would win, —
The same green leaves of Faith;
Yet half its moons are hardly past,
Ere dead the tree and, withered, cast
Its leaves around our path.

Where is Thine own baptismal vow,
Thy blessed Font, — for Thou didst bow,
Once in Thy meekness there?

Alas! the waters that should spring
In places dry, no odor fling
Across the Desert-air.

And Thy pure way is dim to eyes
That, blinded in the sacrifice
Of Earth's idolatry,
Wake only to a fitful light,
When in some ordinances bright
Thy Church doth worship Thee!

Light of the blind! the bruised reed
Thou wilt not break, — the struggling seed
O, pluck not quite away;
Long years have seen us in this place,
Languid yet longing for thy grace, —
Thy peaceful sun-set ray.

Still, like those leaves that hardly cast
Yon golden hue ere it be past
And all is sad again,
So, scarce catch we a single beam
Where blends not soon a lurid gleam —
The storm cloud and the rain.

O, wilt Thou hear us, Who wert bent
Down to the hallowed element,
Gathering us to God, —
Thou who wert tempted like as we,
That Thou in Heaven mightst pitying see
Our wandering, weary road?

Thou who hast formed the circling Year,
The Evergreens, the silent tear
Wept here continually, —
Help us who lately sung Thy birth,
To worship, that each year on earth
May bring us nearer Thee!

First Sunday after Epiphany.

TWILIGHT.

'Tis true, God sometimes hides His ways,
Seen dim, as when pale starlight plays
With dubious lustre round uncertain feet;
Now, flung back in some crystal gleam, —
Now, quenched, while giant shadows seem
To move in outline vast, and dusky phantoms meet.

Such was the light that twice shone clear
Upon the Persian Chief's career,
Gilding his name with strange, prophetic sheen;
And such, the Eastern Star that led
The Magi to the young Child's bed,
With Chaldee love and faith, that Israel's should have been!

Was it to try men, that no light
Betrayed the hurried Egypt-flight?
That over Nazareth, no planet hung?
Or that weird shapes of woe and Death,
(Like phantoms on the star-lit heath)
Against th' age-stricken King, avenging omens flung?

Say rather, 'twas the shroud once laid
O'er buried crimes, now upward swayed
By Memory, that scared his waking dreams;
While clouds of incense idol-caught
(Not richer, what the Wise men brought)
Swept skyward and obscured that Star's else guiding gleam.

So is it still, though Gospel-day
Asserts o'er earlier dawn its sway;
But leaving yet our dutcous memory
To wake each year the Gentile-call
And keep the gladsome Festival
(Gentiles ourselves) of CHRIST's Epiphany.

Lo! less than one short week ago,
Thus came He;—not in infant-show
But glorious—and we owned Him, LORD alone;
And now, how many hearts to-day
Envy the Magi's long, dim way—
How many sadly miss cold Starlight, even, gone!

'Tis true, in this our Christian land
Grim idol-groves no longer stand;
With ready skill, swart artizans no more

Reluctant matter quick compel
By classic forms to sink or swell
And grow a visible God, its makers may adore:

Yet build we, each his inner shrine,
Deep in the heart where Light Divine
Scarce pierces the dark, sinful incense-cloud;
And there Love, Gold, Ambition, Hate
Are worshipped in such idol-state
As if Christ came not, or yet lay in dying shroud!

Alas! ev'n when devout we build
A shrine for Christ Himself and yield
To Him our heart's most costly treasures there,
There comes a dread Epiphany
Of God's own fire our work to try: —
How shall it be with those who Christian Idols rear?

Lord! Who hast said that not in vain
Thou call'st souls to seek Thee — make plain
'Neath soft star or fierce fire our pathway dim;
Letting us question Thee in love
Till, as erst, in Thy Church we prove
God hides Himself from none but those who hide from Him.

Second Sunday after Epiphany.

DAY-BREAKING.

See! now purpled with coming light,
How gleam the distant hills!
And how upon their anxious sight,
Who dimly watched the weary night,
The golden prospect fills!

While, burning still, the lonely Star
Showing two nights the way,
Fast by the Western chambers far,
(God's purpose high, unbid to mar)
Casts yet a lingering ray.

And as we look, near yonder grove
By Jordan's hallowed wave,
Flies down from Heaven a soft-plumed Dove,
Pledging His presence and His love,
Who comes to seek and save:

While elements averse before,
Change natures in our sight —
Type of that mystic rite whose power
Can light up hearts and hopes that wore
Only the hue of Night.

Awake before these Morning beams,
Church of the living God!
For thee, the sword no longer gleams, —
Melted away, like broken dreams,
The oppressor and his rod:

And cast off now thy weary chain,
O! Mother, exiled long:
Lo! yonder is thy Home again,
Thy vine-hills clustering o'er the plain,
Thine old remembered song!

And shining foot-prints, on the steep,
Of the Peace-bringers, glow;
Piercing the clouds that o'er it sleep
And parting, as of old, the Deep,
The Exiles' way to show!

Third Sunday after Epiphany.

THE SIGNAL.

Fishers of Souls! arise,
Called now to early toil;
With humble thoughts and peaceful guise,
Enter the Day's turmoil:
They, soonest for the morn prepared,
Will ever earliest taste the evening's glad reward!

Arise! — already light
Gleams from the vine-clad sides
Of Carmel; and on Hermon's height
The sun's full glance abides:
Already o'er Tiberias' sea
The prophet's voice hath waked thrice-darkened Galilee.

Then waste not hours at home
In slumber or in sport;
Lest, in the Evening's coming gloom,

Ye find the Day too short,
And see by the last lingering ray
Your net unmended still, or empty yet of prey.

Wide as the world is known,
The Empire of that net;
Alike, where Lebanon looks down
Upon Gennesaret,
As there, where kindred cedars grow, [2]
Along the Andes' steeps, those monarchs crowned with snow!

Far, far, your journies lie:
Oft shall the sail, first spread
Where Eastern odors never die,
When Day's last beam is sped,
Still breathe along some Western wave
A faintness of perfume — a fragrance, Morning gave.

And if it does not calm
The sea, ye need not fear;
Since He, whose presence is all balm,
Unseen may wander near:
— The Guider of the lonely ark
He, He will stay the flood and save the reeling bark!

And, when the Sun-set falls
Upon yon placid Lake,
Obedient to your Master's calls,
Your latest farewell take:
And seek the quiet shore where dwells
That goodly fellowship of whom the olden Scripture tells.

One Voice o'er all ye hear,
There 'neath the olive-shade:
"Ho! every one that thirsts, draw near
The fount; the price is paid!"
—Saviour, to reach that Dwelling-place,
Gladly we rise and leave our Home, our Friends, our Race!

[1] There had been, up to our era, three captivities for Galilee;—by Benhadad, by Nebuchadnezzar, and by the Romans.

[2] The Cedars of the Andes, which grow principally near Valparaiso, the Antipodes of Capernaum, attain an extraordinary size like those which acquired such celebrity on Lebanon.

Fourth Sunday after Epiphany.

THE REST OF THE RIGHTEOUS.

Like the last beam when Day is done,
The righteous sinks to rest,
So soft, so calm, so all unknown,
Into that sombre West;
That they who watched with earnest eye
To see its latest flash go by,
Marked not the place not time:
While those who heed not in their mirth
This summons to the darkening Earth
(A Saint's departing chime)
Gather themselves in hearth and hall,
Heedless if it pass by, that solemn Funeral!

No like to watch that bier have they,
Or mid the damp vault grope;
Who, proud though wearied in their way,
Chase yet a glimmering Hope
In some dim Law (on mountains high
Half read 'neath star-lit mystery,

Or murmured from the brook
That bears primeval fragments still,)
Of mystic "Nature's" potent will,
But cast no upward look
To that eternal starry Home
Whose gate the Just man finds fast by the darkling Tomb!

Nor do they come who barb the dart
By which the Soldier fell;
—Rejectors of that blessed part
Our Brother bore so well:
Who, scared by dread of worldly loss
Or lured with love of golden dross,
Their SAVIOUR bid away;
Or e'en, beneath the gracious word
By kings and prophets all unheard,
Their Master seek to slay:
—What care have they to watch the Dead
Who, blinded at noon-day see not the wrath o'er head?

Yet, Brother, bear thee boldly still;
Thou fightest not alone;
Since Morning-call awoke thy will
GOD marked thee for His own:

He asks thee but for fearless heart;
Thy strength of arm is all His part, —
Thy prowess all His gift:
His ear, unheavy, always hears, —
His hand, unshortened, always cheers
Those who his war-cry left;
When angry foes, like floods, are near,
Thy safest place is 'neath God's Spirit-banner there!

'Twas first a Star that met thy gaze,
Across Night's coronet,
That gently lit thy wearied ways,
By thorns and foes beset;
Then Day-dawn glittered from on high,
Till all along the Eastern sky
A golden flood was poured;
And from the mountain-tops there came,
— All now unrolled, Heaven's oriflamme —
The early Signal-word:
"Arise, the Chosen's way prepare,
In heavenly armor clad, your Lord Himself is near!"

They gathered quickly from their sleep,
Roused by that heavenly call;

Armed, all their soldier-faith to keep,
To conquer, or to fall:
And now, the Conflict partly done,
They miss amid the laurels won
A fellow-helm to crown;
Whose wearer softly lies at rest
—His Leader's star upon his breast,
His knightly vizor down;—
Henceforth he tastes, in glad release,
The fruit of lips kept pure, in an eternal Peace!

Fifth Sunday after Epiphany.

THE TORCH-BEARERS.

Five times, the swift-footed Weeks
Vanish since Christ's Star was seen;
Not to-day, our Mother seeks
To fix our gaze where it has been
But, treasuring what the Saviour taught,
Bids us reflect in turn each beam we caught;
That so, in brightest Gospel-day,
Souls (dazzled else) may learn from us the way,
And the drear Heathen-night
Of hearts untaught, or hard, grow radiant with our light!

Do ye ask what this may mean?
—How earth-walking souls may shed
Heaven-like brilliance mid a scene
Below all gloom, and clouds o'erhead?
—How pilgrims, as they onward press,

Win in each trace they leave, new blessedness?—
Best answer ye may learn from Him
(Who trod, that He might prove, the pathway dim)
As one day, lingering there,[3]
He sat Him down and told us who those Blessed are!

Say not thus, that all too high
Their state will our reach elude,—
That, too frail, we vainly try
To grasp the least beatitude:
Lo, voices o'er Time's solemn Deep
Their wondrous unison of promise keep,
First uttered in prophetic strain,[4]
Then in tones more Divine caught up again,
Assuring, with kind word,
A strength beyond our own—an unction from the LORD!

Was it but a melody
Idly breathing on the air,—
Swelling twice, and then to be
Thenceforward only echoes there?
Do not the Watchmen it foretold
Their joyful rounds on walls of Sion hold?
And who are those that, white-robed, stand

To-day before our shrine on either hand,
But its pledged Ministry,
And Priests who offer till the last Epiphany!

Faint not, then, your task beside;
Cast up high the Gospel-way;
Lift your banners, far and wide,
For ensigns to the souls that stray;
And, where the road may darkling grow,
Let your bright torches all the brighter glow:
So, when CHRIST comes along one Day
His work to prove and His reward to pay,
Yours may be found and given, —
As Lamps were ye on earth, Stars shall ye grow in Heaven.

[3] The Sermon on the Mount is the Second Morning Lesson for the Day.

[4] See Isa. lxi. 1, and S. Luke, iv. 16—21, for this unison.

Sixth Sunday after Epiphany.

TO-DAY AND TO-MORROW.

"Soft Gales that, laden with the balm
Of Evening, fan my cheek,—
Say, will ye make the Morrow calm,
Or troubled?—wild, or meek?

"And you, fast-changing Clouds, that wear
Your gracious, sunset forms—
Say, will ye deck a Morning fair
Or herald it with storms?"—

So spoke my heart as once the West,
At night-fall, met my gaze;
So, fain my self-tormenting breast
Would pierce the Evening-haze.

It was not then the breeze that stirr'd
Nor clouds, half-vocal grown;
But, from God's oft-repeated word,
Echoed another tone:

"My servant! care for what thou hast;
Dream not of joy or sorrow
Around the hidden Future cast;
To-day shapes out To-morrow.

"Even as thou workest, it will be;
The Means and End accord;
Who works for Earth, or works for Me,
Each has his own reward.

"Think'st thou the gentle lilies plan
The dews they drink to-night?—
Can thought of thine prolong a span,
Thy life-time or thy height?—

"Then humble, like those lilies, be;
Like them, look upward still;
And do and suffer trustfully,
Waiting upon my will!

"It may be that this deepening gloom
But thicker, darker grows,
—A shadow that th' expectant Tomb
Upon each victim, throws.

"If so, what will To-morrow be?
— What Life's To-day has been;
— Or troubled, dark and sore to see,
Or of immortal sheen!

"New Earth, new Heavens with brighter beam
Shall break upon thine eyes;
Or that dense smoke and lurid gleam
Whose sharp worm never dies!"

Chill fell the tone upon my breast,
Thicker the Evening-haze,
Yet a soft ray dwelt in the West
And, peaceful, met my gaze!

Sunday called Septuagesima.

ATHETESIS.

O, wilt Thou still receive
The heart that turns to Thee?
— That, early taught for sin to grieve,
But frail Thy promise to believe,
Would yet the Spring-time lost retrieve
Again Thy face to see.

Lord! Thou hast known its way;
Thine eye, all watchful, beamed
Upon me, when I stooped to pray
As when, delirious and astray,
I madly thought to curse the day
That first upon me gleamed!

Thy hand my footsteps kept,
That, erring, longed to tread
Where Pleasure's gaudy pageant swept

Or where, entranced, the senses slept
Until her victims, all unwept,
Sank lost among the Dead!

Nor less within Thy sight
The strife that slumbered not,
When Fancy flung his robes of light
O'er fell and field, o'er Day and Night:
Till, dazzled by the visions bright,
I scorned my humble lot.

And when I, weary, sought
To take a better part,
And to the shrine of Science brought
All eager vows and zeal unbought,
And half-divine her altars thought, —
My God, Thou read'dst my heart!

Thou hadst it when, at Morn,
'Twas lifted unto Thee;
And, when the Day was older worn,
Mid Pleasure's lure or Learning's scorn,
Thou saw'st it laboring, though forlorn,
Again Thy face to see!

Take it then close to Thee,
  Yet while I dare to pray;
Lest, mid my struggles Thine to be,
My lifted heart and bended knee
And lingering hope, one day I see
  Myself a Castaway!

Sunday called Sexagesima.

THE SEED OF THE BLESSED.

"In thy seed shall the Earth be blessed!"
—Thus was the patriarch addressed,
But not as if of many, or of all:
'Twas but a glimpse, a flash before
The pomp that ages yet shroud o'er,
Of One whom brethren glad, their Prince shall call.

Long years, and still that pomp delays:
But, ever and anon, there plays
Prophetic light through the dim, dusky vail,
Intensely bright with promised grace;
So that the fainting Syrian's race
Might well have clung to their exclusive pale.

And so, nor wisely nor too well,
They did cling to the ancient spell;
Contented with the title of Elect:

But proving by scant faithful deed
Themselves to be of *his* high seed,
Whose faith still swam when dearest hopes were wreck'd.

O, fire profane! O, hearth accurst!
When, one day, doomed to hear the worst,
The record of GOD's threats they wildly burn:
—In stately garments, standing by
They let the hallowed ashes lie
And scatter, as of old, in worse plagues to return!

From such strange scene, from such sad fate
'Tis good to turn and see how wait
GOD's blessings on the Faithful and his race;
The sons of Rechab, firm and true,
Take place above th' untrusting Jew
And stand, all time, before th' ALMIGHTY's face!

Needs not to ask what this may mean
Of princedom high or lot serene,
Greater or less than Christians now may earn:
But, since GOD's dealings ever run
The one best way, as He is One,
Strive more the Rule than the Reward to learn.

That rule is written all the same
For us, as erst for Abraham,
(Our aids far more, our part far easier done,
Now realties to types succeed
And promises melt in the deed:)
Believe and do, and Heaven is surely won.

Not, as though God our service needs
Or pays for serviceable deeds;
In pure free-will, His Paradise is given;
But Man must fit himself on Earth
To esteem that Paradise's worth —
Who loves not here, he cannot live in Heaven!

Therefore, when at the Saviour's feet
The Woman, with her ointment sweet
And flowing tears and love exceeding, knelt
She proved, even by such offering slight,
Her faith in Him before Whose sight
Glow future fruits ere yet the bud is felt.

Yet only His sight has such scope.
If *we* would win her heavenly hope,
Not only must we kneel, like her, and weep

But steep our robes of sin and strife
With odors of a holy life,
—Our place among the Blest Seed, thus we keep!

Sunday called Quinquagesima.

THE POWER OF UNBELIEF.

Sad music — that, from prophet-lyre [5]
Breathed out, went circling, swelling on;
Until it reached, in regions higher,
And shook the bolt Man's sin had won!
— How like, in all but Heavenly fire,
To our dark World's complaining tone!

We mourn because some City fair
That, queen-like, sat amid the rest,
Now lonely lies and, in despair,
Beholds her Star sink in the West;
— The jewels from her fragrant hair,
Torn off at some new Bride's behest!

More plaintive, still, our loud lament,
If sinful youth and hardened age
A yoke of sorrows sharp have bent

For us to wear, — O, pilgrimage
The woefullest! O, wreath oft sent
For naught but Death to disengage!

Perchance with purer sympathy,
Because the ways of Sion mourn,
We weep and half-judge murmuringly
His wisdom, Who with all has borne;
And think that Heaven will fuller be
The deeper the Church-pavement 's worn.

Dear God, Thou knowest! — but, though we see
A virtue in external forms,
There must an inner fitness be
Ere Love Divine or lights or warms,
— A wondrous reciprocity,
Each carried in the other's arms!

Thou canst work miracles, we know:
And Thou who causest, dost control
And, ev'n to human hands, allow
Strange power to heal and to console;
From whence the legend old did grow
That Man from Heaven, Life's fire once stole!

But yet with measure, such supplies:
  Thine own ordained Servants' throng
Once failed an Ill to exorcise;
  And it is writ, Thy truths among,
That Thou Thyself, in human guise,
  Foundst Unbelief for Thee too strong!

* * * * *

O, Brother, let us hushed remain;
  Nor murmur that God suffers sin;
Until we learn the minstrel-strain
  That drives out the strong Foe within.
If Christ Himself were here again,
  Could He work wonders with His kin?

[5] The doleful Lamentations of Jeremiah are heard, both morning and evening, on this Day.

First Sunday in Lent.

THE TEMPTATION.

'Tis Morning; o'er the dark-blue sky
No mist to float — no cloud to fly;
And, brightly gemmed, the crystal Deep
Seems in its Naiad caves to sleep:
  In such an age, in such an hour,
If thoughtless, be Thou near to bless
  And keep me by Thy watchful power,
O, Tempted in the Wilderness!

And when, o'er Land and Deep, there streams
A glorious flood of Noon-day beams;
Keep me in forest, cave, or dell,
Or where the angry waters swell,
  In crowded haunts where men allure,
Mid foeman's wrath, or friends caress —
  In each, in all, preserve me pure
O, Tempted in the Wilderness!

And when the Evening's welcome shade
Shall find me by some fountain laid;
Or, as she shakes her dewy wreath,
Beholds me bowing unto Death;
  Do Thou be near, my soul to keep
In that sad hour of sore distress;
  And unaffrighted let me sleep,
O, Tempted in the Wilderness!

I pray to Thee, for Thou hast known
My spirit's suffering, all Thine own;
And earthly wants and misbelief,
And this world's glory and its grief,
  And other gods and selfish sway,—
All these Thyself, did once oppress:
  —Help me all these to put away,
O, Tempted in the Wilderness!

Second Sunday in Lent.

THE TWO VOICES.

Once, upon a sunny Autumn day,
'Neath some ancient forest-trees I lay,
Watching shadows in their fitful play,
Seeing how each strove to catch the other;
And I could but think: How like are ye
To Man's heart-aims, and how like is he
(Himself but a shade, as Angels see,)
To you, fleeting Forms, as if he were your Brother!

Then there came, from out the Forest-deep
Voices as of two that converse keep
—Both sweet, one sad — while all else did sleep;
"Wherefore," breathed the sad One, "should I carry
Still my golden vase to Adonai? —
Filled with perfume of devoutest sigh,
His austere glance oft hath passed it by
And, for gracious gifts in answer, bid me tarry.

"Often mark I whence my perfumes come;
—From pale flowers, alas, that cannot bloom,
Drooping in an undeserved gloom,
Or from plants, no dew-drops ever cherish;—
Yet, when hopefullest to carry back,
With glad speed, the graces that they lack
—Showers and sunshine on my grateful track,—
Rayless all and dewless, they are left to perish!"

"Murmur not, O kindest Spirit!"—here
Swelled responsive a new Tone and clear,—
"Nor thy Maker's ways, most equal, fear;
He to each one, as his faith is, giveth;
Lo, His Day,—so long-time sought in vain
By ev'n kings and prophets and, when plain,
Lighting but the lowliest to His train,—
Is still Noon or Night, just as each one receiveth.

"And if lore, the Wise could not attain,
Grew to be poor, helpless Infants' gain,
—Who so fit to learn that Martyr-strain?
—Who, to wear that bloody Baptism given?
Ever thus to meekest, humblest hearts
That Grief skills to bear their patient parts,

"More than asked for, the ALL-GOOD imparts;
Though they know it not, lo, Satan falls from Heaven!"

Then, amid that ancient Forest-deep,
Both Tones died away, and all did sleep;
But the music in my heart I keep,
Echoing now the sad part, now the other;
While its sweetest cadence, still I deem
(And I found since in GOD's Book the theme,
Whence I know it was not all a dream,)
"GOD does naught without cause: murmur not, my Brother."

Third Sunday in Lent.

KNOWLEDGE THAT IS NOT A DREAM.

'Tis true, all speech of Heavenly love,
Wisdom above mere daily ken,
Our worldly spirits, fail to move;
While still our shattered day-dreams prove
How much we need to know, how scant our lore has been!

If to the Prophet's cell we go,
Or at pure Priestly lips inquire,—
How dull our intellect, and slow!
Or, if some fevered thoughts do glow
Within, they are but caught from strange and heathen fire!

Such fires as, builded every day
And nursed at our heart-altars, burn;
Shrines for our Learning's proud display
And on whose horns our hold we lay,
—Alas, both horn and hold how frail, one Day, to learn!

Down to moss-covered Stones we bow;
Within whose mass compacted, stands
(We think) the tale of when and how
God formed the solid earth below,
While subtile flame and floods obeyed His plastic hands.

And when, beneath those rocks' defence,
We find some lowly modest Flower,
We torture it for evidence;
The lessons of its innocence
We hold but parables for some poetic hour.

And ev'n the Winds, careering free,
We question on their viewless track —
Explore their mission, what it be;
— They blow but as God lists, while we
List not of Him whose breath impels or holds them back!

More venturous still, some burning soul
O'erleaps the bounds of this Earth-sphere;
And, where unkenn'd of planets roll
Led by sweet Music's soft control,
He calls and claims a Stranger to its due career.

These all are wonders; and the tale
That stories them, might well be held
A Parable whose folded vail
Encloses in its dusky pale
But few whose taste or trust is not full soon repelled.

Yet long and wide, the thick array
Of listeners to such lofty themes:
—Youth pauses on its heedless way,
Age fain its ebbing force would stay,
While Strength and Beauty bow before these Knowledge-dreams.

But Knowledge that is Not a Dream,
Has scanty pupils for its lot;
Christ's truths, as hopeless mysteries, seem
And Tabor's light, an idle gleam,
—Elias comes again, and the World knows him not!

Lord, cleanse me of the desolate pride
That longs within my heart to dwell
And watch (a strong man, armed) beside
Its prey, till, of its empire wide,
Neglected fasts and prayer too late would break the Spell!

Fourth Sunday in Lent.

THE TWO VISITS.

Once, in an eager but yet slow procession
Winding round Olivet,
With sorrowing heart and glance of deep depression,
Our rudest housings set,

Came the Redeemer;—not with gorgeous banners
Of might and victory;
Welcomed, 'tis true, with loud, short-lived hosannas
Changed soon to: *Crucify!*

Once more He comes; not for one Race or Nation,
In patient, weeping love;
But sternly searching all through His Creation,
To punish or approve.

Who shall portray the terrors of that Visit?—
Prophets, with hearts inspired
And lips Heaven-touched, have faintly told what is it,
—World-dreaded, world-desired.

Wherewith shall we, His creatures, come before Him?
Will clouds of incense hide
The sinner? Or will victims' blood, shed o'er him,
God's anger turn aside?

Can He be won by human intercession
Even though, (O, saddest dole!)
We give our first-born for our own transgression,
The Body for the Soul?

Nay, none of these can earn a glance of favor;
Only a life aligned
By His own pattern and His gospel's savor,
That day, will tolerance find.

Only the eyes that loved to trace the story
Of His long-suffering,
May bear to gaze, unblinded, on the glory
Of His World-visiting.

Only the heart that thrones Christ in its living
And feels to die is gain,
May meet Him safely in His sentence-giving
On the vast Judgment-plain!

Fifth Sunday in Lent.

THE ALTAR-FIRE.

PRIEST.

Gather around; with voices blending,
Worship beneath this crimsoned shrine,
With prayers that, incense-like, ascending
May pierce into the Throne Divine!

CHOIR.

Brightly, O Altar-flame
Burn on; thou bearest thy last offering:
No more, at twilight dim, in any Name
Shall Minister his trembling Victim bring.
No more, no more,
Shall Man with sacrifice or perfumes rare
Or rich libations at thy foot, implore,
Amid some splendid hour, his God to spare!

PRIEST.

Gather around, the blood that staineth
This hallowed place, shall be your aid;

Till gladdening unction that remaineth
Will make the Trembling, not afraid!

CHOIR.

But with a Sacrifice,
A Fire, a Priest to dwell continually
In Heaven, in each one's heart — where, without price,
Atonement, Hope, Eternal life may be —
We worship now,
Trusting that Thou wilt hear our sorrowing prayer;
And, as we breathe our sadly-lingering vow,
Ask Thee to sanctify the Kneelers there!

PRIEST.

Gather around; with faces lowly
And hearts repenting, bend in prayer;
And if ye weep, lo! Angels holy
Each precious drop to Heaven will bear.

CHOIR.

And Thou, O, Victim blest!
Who bent'st Thyself from out Thy glorious Heaven
(Left now Thy starlit place of calmest rest
And purity) to be for mortals given —

How in Thy sight
Ought we to dwell, as still remembering
That every breath of Earth, or feeling light
May damp the flame of Thy pure offering!

PRIEST.

Draw near; around us all is fading
Into the gloom of coming Night;
Only our Fire has known no shading—
See, how it leaps in living light!

CHOIR.

Burn—as on thee we gaze,
O! Altar-fire, we see the Earth grow dim.
Be it so e'er: let thy perpetual blaze,
Hiding the World, give light to worship Him;
And when no more
May the dark veil of falling Night be riven,
Our GOD shall make thy Flame, fresh radiance pour
To guide our trembling footsteps into Heaven!

Sunday next-before Easter.

THE MARCH OF KEDRON.

Sign of the Heavenly Year—
Pledge that the Home is near,
In whose breath, its children's hearts expand—
When those who fear the Lord,
Each to each, with pleasant word,
Often speak and grasp the others' hand.

God hears each warm salute;
God marks each greeting mute;
In His Book, all such are written down:
Tears, gems are counted there—
Every smile, a setting rare
Laid before Him for His jewelled crown!

Dost thou, then, ask if soon
Will that high count be done,
Soul! bewildered in Earth's sensuous laws?—

God waits to publish it,
But for Man to grow more fit;
Each love-pulse the moment, nearer draws!

So it proved long ago
When that dense march and slow
Circled Olivet and Kedron passed;
Each warm Hosanna there,
Each devout Palm-bearer's prayer,
Served the lingering Easter-day to haste.

So can it prove to-day,
If we will only lay
At Christ's feet some cast-off cloak of sin:
—Such a self-victory,
(Though no human eyes may see)
Palms for us to bear in Heaven, doth win;

And by all springing hopes,
—Each longing wish that droops
Till the Sun of righteousness arise,—
We (though not in the flesh)
Are following Christ's march afresh
And grow meet to earn His sacrifice!

Easter-Day.

THE RETURN OF THE LEAF.

It was the Winter-time,
When the sweet Angel-chime
Stole o'er the Chaldee shepherds' slumberous sense;
Ringing out, full and clear,
The burden of its cheer:
"Glory to God on high; good will to men from thence:"
— A chant that, taught then from above,
Hath ever since, sublime, intoned the Church's love!

Fit was it that, bedight
In dress of snowy white,
The Earth, all bride-like, should receive her Lord:
Nor strange, a wintry chill
Her very breath should fill
Waiting so long for His delayed, prophetic word.
Alas, all help for her was o'er,
Unless the Woman-born should her lost peace restore!

Three decades, hushed, pass by;
Three years of ministry,
Of wonders, wisdom, costliest love forlorn;
Three days of mortal gloom
In the mysterious Tomb;
Ere He may, glowing, rise on the true Bridal-morn,
—Ere consummated the emprize
That to our Manhood frail, the GODHEAD'S Self allies.

E'er since, on that blest Day
Glows now a vernal ray,
As if to mark a new Creation's Spring;
Earth, clad in loveliest flowers
All fragrant with soft showers,
Spreads her green, jewelled carpet for her LORD and King;
While, to the upward-looking eye,
New Hope, new Grace, new Life shine in the open sky.

Therefore, each rolling year,
The withered leaves and sere
That icy Christmas scatters, crisped and torn,
Wander till Easter comes;
When in their ancient homes
And on old forest-boughs, they find themselves new-born.

— Type, how the Child of Virgin-womb,
The grieved and sorrowing Man, rose radiant from the Tomb!

Lo! ere the morning breaks,
Night hangs in thickest flakes
Upon the curtain of th' expectant East;
Just as our Lenten cloud
And gloomier Sabbath-shroud
And Friday-cross precede our glorious Paschal-feast,
While yet we struggle here on Earth,
Mid varying light and shade, for our own Easter-birth!

Sure as that sad Week's flight
Leads to glad, Easter light;
Sure as green leaves, each year, the boughs do hide;
Sure as the Christmas-snow
Melts ere the March-winds blow,
Or as the hue and breath of flowers become a Bride; —
Our fasts and chill and woe and Night,
Wrapped in the Saviour's shroud, shall turn to endless Light!

First Sunday after Easter.

THE LAUNCH OF THE WRECK.

Twice a thousand years and more
Had flung their wrecks along Time's shore;
And Earth-pilgrims day by day,
Sank wearied, worn-out, by the way
—Happy, if where wild-flowers wave
They found some calm, love-tended grave;
But no echo swelled the strain
That buried Forms should live again [the Main!
— That those wrecked Ships once more should, gallant, plough

Dimmer, for each younger year,
Glows that bright, early truth and clear;
Fewer, from the Forest-deep
Where patriarchal whispers sleep,
Float the crisp and withered leaves;
And, stronger as this World-life heaves,
Fainter flows Tradition's stream;
Till Eden-knowledge grew a dream
And Man forgot (or worse) his high ancestral theme.

Where, at last, was that lost theme
Again revived? And whence the gleam
O'er sad sepulchres and urns,
That now in Christian church-yards burns
With a ray so pure, profound? —
It was not in old, classic ground;
Not where Tempe's lovely vale
Was yearly sad with Orphic wail;
Nor where Dodona kept her doves and priestess pale;

Nor even whence those sweet doves flew
— That olden clime of tales half true, —
Where a dim, religious Art
Shewed but its mysteries in part,
Where the darksome Pyramid
The patriarchal doctrine hid,
And the Statue-music weird
That Thebes, night and morning, heard,
No answering chord of Hope in human bosoms stirred!

But in lowly Palestine —
When Jewish glories ceased to shine,
And God's Temple, oft profaned,

For but one offering more remained;
When prophetic pledge must be
Or false or all reality —
Waked at last a murmur low,
A Woman's tone, half-joy, half-woe,
Breathing a wondrous tale to deadened hearts and slow!

Twice, the sad Passover-moon,
With earliest Even climbing soon
Olivet, the livelong night
Had watched how Angel-servants bright
Tended a new Tomb with tears,
Where lay awhile their LORD and hers;
Till His mystic slumber o'er,
He came forth to the light once more
And taught one gentle heart to wonder and adore!

Ever since, that heart's glad creed:
"CHRIST from the dead is risen indeed"
— Blending with revealed lore,
The World had lost or scorned before —
Gathers, as each day sweeps by,
Fresh votaries to swell the cry;

And, stored up in the holiest place
Of Christ's own sacramental grace,
Our graves and altars both, it crowns with life and peace.

First-fruits of the souls that slept—
Pledge that our bodies shall be kept
Like Thine own to rise, whose food
Is Thy mysterious flesh and blood—
Teach us, calm, to leave dear friends
To strange repose, as this life ends;
Hearing all the while this strain
"Those Forms, so still, shall breathe again;
Those wrecked Life-barks once more shall, gallant, plough the Main!"

Second Sunday after Easter.

THE HEALING OF EPHRAIM.

Sweet promise to the half-learned, stricken heart
That trembles o'er its part;
Sweet comfort to the wandering souls that mourn
And long but to return:
"In Me, their help the needy ones shall find;
In Me, the fatherless a Father kind?"

Such, the soft accents to Thine elder Race
Of Thine unwearied grace;
Such were the tones that long-sought Ephraim heard
In Thy prophetic word,
Breathed then in vain along his desolate way,
But echoing yet in Christian ears to-day.

Be ours, to love its music and to learn
Each close, each thrilling turn
That, stronger than old Orpheus' fabled strain,

Tells of the Dead again
Recalled from more than an earth-covered grave,
Ransomed by One who died that He might save!

But if those gladdening airs inspired, should prove
Too lofty for our love,
(While, all the time, our heart reluctant owns
The sway of earthlier tones)
Soon as their cadences unheeded die,
A sterner strain and wailings sad swell high.

Lo! o'er the desert of the Arab horde,
The wild wind of the LORD
—The whistling, mortal wind—sweeps as of old
Till Ephraim's sin be told,
—His hidden sin, he thought no more to see,
—His bound up, yet disclosed, iniquity.

So sweeps and searches still a breath from Him,
Each secret shrine and dim;
So glare, like leopards' on their evening-prey,
Eyes on our wilful way:
While ev'n the King who else would guard our path,
(An angry gift) is crucified in wrath!

Yet where He sits, the First-born from the dead,
He waits His grace to shed
O'er each sad heart, o'er all returning feet;
And if with some He meet
Too lame for aught but at His door to sit,
— He heals and strengthens them to enter it.

Not such as these, alone, His kindness prove;
But instant in His love,
By prophets, miracles and providence
And inward stricken sense,
He ever calls us as Lambs to the fold
And pledges His own blood all safe to hold.

Well may we treasure such a promised Rest,
So called and healed and blest;
Well may our echoing hearts take up again
That sweetest prophet strain:
"From Him their fruit, the barren ones shall find;
In Him, the fatherless a Father kind!"

Third Sunday after Easter.

THE CHURCH IN THE WILDERNESS.

A little while! — Say, have we learned
The words' full meaning, yet?
Or is not rather to be earned
A lesson true that hidden burned
But fraught, if only rightly turned,
With gracious pledge and sweet?

More gracious for this cloudy day
That wraps our Desert-church:
Closing to human skill her way,
Veiling their fault who from her stray
Or listless far off rather stay
Than for her altar search!

Saviour, for three sad troubled days
Thine early servants lost
The lustre of Thy wondrous ways,

Till Easter blest their tear-dimmed gaze;
Then all was dark till the displays
Of fiery Pentecost.

So do thy Servants find it still:
—First called to follow Thee
By some heart-piercing tone, their will
Half from the world won—bright hopes fill
The horizon of their hopes, until
The bridal moments flee.

A little while—and all is dark;
Deserted all, and lone;
Nor welcomes the dim Morn, the lark;
A cloud envelopes shrine and ark;
Watching for Thee, we only mark
A cold and sealèd stone!

A little while—if patient there
And prayerful, comes again
The Bridegroom with His dewy hair
And fragrant as the lilies are;
While o'er the Tomb, lo, angels care
And shew where He has lain!

More plainly still Thy Church may ween
The truth of this dim word;
A little while since all has been
Bright as the Morn from mountains seen,
— Now, dreary shadows come between
Her children and their LORD:

A little while — the shadow breaks
Before a ray of Thine;
The gloomy Night to glad Day wakes;
The lark his hymn up with him takes;
And the fresh Sun more brilliant makes
Her services and shrine.

Be trustful, then, O Mother dear
This pledge to thy heart press;
A little while — and every fear
Shall, like a sea-mist, disappear
And the Beloved Himself be near
Thee in the Wilderness!

Fourth Sunday after Easter.

LOSS AND GAIN.

"Lord, only one short, hurried Moon
Since we have known all; and so soon,
Lose we Thy light again?
Alas, before is warmed the love
Or roused the strength, that we must prove
Ere fit to join Thy martyr-train!

"We trusted, until that sad Day
Wherein the World-prince held wild sway,
To see Thee on Thy Throne;
Now, better taught yet clinging still
To fancies fond and worldly will,
O Master, leave us not alone!"

So sighed, one time, Thy faithful few;—
Reluctant lest aught might renew
Some scene of shuddering gloom;

Or, dazzled by Thine Easter-light,
Misjudging in their dubious sight
The path of toil to lead them home.

So, to this day, the heart late-won,
Just taught to joy at Easter-dawn,
Sighs as if losing Thee,
When its first raptured feelings fade;
And back again — now Sun, now shade —
Comes Earth-life's stern reality!

True, it has gone in mourning weed —
True, it has known Thee risen indeed;
But a dim mystery
Still veils the sense that would pierce higher,
And waits for Pentecostal fire
Or to consume, or purify.

Thou work'st by an all-perfect plan;
'Twas not enough for sinful Man
To be redeemed, alone,
But to be fit for Heaven, beside
And flame baptized and sanctified,
Here, ev'n on Earth, be all Thine own!

Therefore, the gracious answer came,
(To every Christian heart the same
And kind as we are weak)
"My servants! my sharp task is done;
Your places that my Cross has won
For you in Heaven, yourselves must seek.

"I go those places to prepare:
Ye gain them but by fast and prayer,
By work and vigil, here;
And lest your nature, all too frail
For such high aim, at last might fail,
I send thence a new Comforter!"

Lord! thanks for that sweet, gentle tone
Whose music, if else all alone,
Keeps us glad company,
And softens, if it cannot solve,
The doubt some dreary days evolve,
How we can gain by losing Thee!

Fifth Sunday after Easter.

THE PRINCEDOM OF ISRAEL.

Bright clouds and softest showers —
Low sounds of fragrant rain
Whose drops, the Angels of the Flowers
Scent, as descends the glittering train —
Ye fitly mark the gracious Day [stay!
When the Church reads, how long God's heavenly dews can

Not, for the broken vows,
Oft pledged, forgotten still;
Not, for the idol-fire that glows
Upon each lonely, tree-crowned hill;
Doth He forsake His Israël
For whom in morning-mist, the wondrous manna fell!

The wild again shall bloom,
As erst the prophet sang;
And, mid the vine-leaves' deepening gloom

The blushing fruit shall clustering hang:
Ev'n Noon-tide glows with tempered light,
For burning Day still drinks the chalice of the Night.

Though Horeb flows no more
Yet, mid the desert-sand
Where Sorek's ripples seek the shore,
Beneath the grace that Philip's hand
On the bright element bestows,
If not the Ethiop's skin, his soul less dusky grows!

Then, promised gifts begun
On Meroë to gleam;
And Israel's light, dark Sheba's son
Saw brighten to a purer beam;
While, too, Samaria's sorcerer,
Touched by Apostles' hands, learned what his foul rites were.

Then, from the sombre Past,
Intoned a Voice fulfilled: —
"One day, and eager crowds shall haste,
On Israel's Hope their own to build;
Ten men, the long-scorned Jew shall see
Seizing his skirt and glad, with him to company!"

Is this so marvellous,
O, wise man of the Earth?
—That God should not be like to us
Whose minds are changing from our birth,
Who one day love what next we hate,—
False as the fitful breeze, wayward as misnamed Fate?

But He is ever One;
Unchangeable, His ways;
From His star-lighted, silent throne
One glance, Eternity surveys;
No faded Past or Future dim
Unrolls its page, but all is Present aye for Him!

Therefore the Princedom high,
Once given to Israel,
Survives his sad Captivity
That fleeting records tell;
—'Tis but his own reluctant will
That leaves his Land a waste, his Home deserted still!

Sunday after Ascension.

THE ACOLYTES.

With Thee in life! — Thine eye benign upon us, —
Thy gentle hand, throughout the slippery way, —
Thy voice, when eager foes had else undone us
Or perils worn, to turn them from their prey
And guard us still unharmed amid the strife: —
Keep us with Thee in Life!

With Thee in heart! — thus pure and calm and lowly,
To watch Thee through Thy human pilgrimage;
To trace Thee from Thy Starlit cradle holy,
Thro' tempted youth and sinless Manhood's age,
To the last, incommunicable part: —
Keep us with Thee in Heart!

With Thee in death! — Life's feverish pulses over,
Stilled in the darkness of our agony;

Then, as of old, O! our lost souls' best Lover,
In the dim Garden came to comfort Thee
An Angel-watcher of Thy fainting breath —
So strengthen us in Death!

And when that Hour is past, though angel-bidden
We timid linger near Thy golden gate,
Wilt Thou be there in Whom our hope was hidden
To take within the souls that trembling wait?
— Then, blest beyond all glorious presage given,
Keep us with Thee in Heaven!

Whitsunday.

THE NEW SINAI.

Ye, who would walk in white one Day
Before the Lamb, now put your white robes on;
And, since so far we bear to stray
From habits, hallowed in the times by-gone,
And vestiaries hold no more
The garments the new-baptized wore,—
Wear them at least upon your heart;
Unspotted, pure in every part
And fit, as aught of ours can claim,
To bear and to reflect the Pentecostal flame!

For so, when long, long years ago
This Day grew pale at Sinai's awful glare
And darkness visible below
While ghostly trumpets swelled and echoed there—
Through all the wandering Host redeemed,
An unstained vesture brightly gleamed;

Proving, thus far, obedience
To free themselves from stains of sense
And wilful act, ere they drew nigh
To gaze on tokens of their MAKER's purity!

'Tis true, those tokens come no more,
Mid gloom and brilliance struggling, to our sight;
Nor aching eyes, fain to explore,
Find darkness only in th' excessive light;
Nor rushing winds at first swell high,
Then into fearful silence sigh;
While milder, lambent flames illume
Pale faces in an upper room: —
But not less earnest nor less true,
The still, small signs that pledge GOD's own descent anew!

And if no visible crowns of fire
Mark the Elect; yet viewless still they dwell
Within our hearts and there inspire
A power and peace, no gift of tongues could tell;
The marvels that shone on the path
And won the way of earlier Faith,
Have ceased; but o'er the sin-sick soul
Our faith still wields as strong control;

And, just as sure as erst, may men
Take knowledge of our walk who have with Jesus been.

And though not now, mid light intense
And mighty sound or on soft dove-like wings,
The Spirit comes, yet Christian penitence
As real finds His wondrous visitings;
And, as of old declared, His grace
Waits for us in the Holy place
(The Church) where God His name has set,
Choosing there chiefly to be met,
And promising each worshipper
In sacramental signs to send the Comforter!

Would you, then, unconsumed abide
That Real Presence, not less grieved and lost
By sin of ours at Whitsuntide
Than of the Tribes or Twelve at Pentecost?
—Leave all your frailties far behind:
Only your love and sorrow find
Forbearance in His mercy's store,
Who judges tenderly the poor,
Who makes all wild heart-throbbings cease
And teaches those He loves, the secret of His Peace!

Trinity Sunday.

EDEN AND GETHSEMANE.

Dark, formless, void, was the unregioned space;
No wave to stamp, no shore to wear a trace;
Till, moving o'er the dreary waters' face,

God's Spirit waked the echo of His Light.
Then, with that pulse, Time's Ocean dim grew bright
And rolling worlds began their mystic flight!

Then sprang, each instant, up some beauty new;
Each Day declining lingered still to view
Some just-born grace — more gracious for the dew

That pensive Night shed o'er each lineament:
From light and shade and scents and music blent
Harmoniously, a Heavenward worship went.

With such fair scene, the Earth Man's vision blest
(The wondrous Week not yet quite sunk in rest)
What time — God's image outwardly imprest,

Within, a living Soul by God's own breath,
And monarch of all moving things beneath, —
He trod at first Euphrates' flowery heath.

Then came an hour of bitter change for all.
The Angels wept (could they be sad) Man's Fall;
Earth, cursed for him, wore now a dreary pall;

Her loveliest flowers that wooed his touch before,
Now thorns, to guard them from his dalliance, bore —
Her fruits demand his sweat and tears, and more!

If dark the Earth, his heart was yet more drear.
Within, Lust, Falsehood, Shame, Remorse, and Fear:
Nought but a promise dim, God left to cheer

His sinking soul that, when his sand was run
And his worn frame a resting-place had won
In kindred dust, his punishment was done!

Yet not unmixed with pangs this pledge he bears;
For to his gaze, made prescient through long years,
A bloodstained mount with Crosses three appears:

One — true type of the Race, — hangs hopeless there;
Another's pale lips just can move in prayer
— That He may save, ONE deigns their woe to share!

Hence came it that from patriarchal lore
The mystic sign, the Cross, its meaning wore
That Egypt gives it — Endless life in store![6]

And hence, for ages, Heaven-taught faith relied
On symbols that the coming Truth did hide:
— Each priest-slain Lamb showed forth the CRUCIFIED!

Then, when the mystery of Sin was done
And patient Faith its lingering pledge had won,
A new Creation on the Earth begun:

For, woman-born, Thou cam'st in human guise
— With Woman's softness, Man's infirmities —
To win back our first Father's Paradise.

In every trait, Thou fought'st *his* conflict o'er:
And, what no living Soul could do before,
Thy quickening Spirit did achieve and more!

So, in a Garden, Thou didst strive anew,
(Like where the fatal tree of Knowledge grew)
But pluck'dst the tree of Life, REDEEMER, too!

We may not follow farther on the path
(Too weak our wishes or too faint our faith)
That led Thee through the thronging realms of Death

To visit and console th' expectant band
Of souls that erst, in many a distant land,
Thro' veils and shadows, knew and loved Thy hand.

The wondrous plan was still not all complete.
To make us for the purchased glory meet,
We, too, must pluck the tree of Life and eat!

Therefore, at Pentecost, in fire came down
The SPIRIT with His grace the Work to crown
And help the hearts He wants to make His own.

Then were fulfilled strange, ancient types and dim; —
The fire that burnt the Victim's quivering limb
And Heavenward bore it, but prefigured Him;

The guiding Dove sent from the lonely Ark, —
The auguries that, through world-ages dark,
Men thought in wayward flight of birds, to mark: —

These all were glimpses of Thy coming, LORD;
While reverent hearts, but unread in Thy Word,
The Shadow for the Substance oft adored.

Ah! better this than the cold clime and drear,
In which they dwell who will not own Thee here
But scorn Thee in half-hardihood, half-fear.

Let no such phantasms, LORD, *our* souls benight;
But let us, walking in Thy Gospel-light,
Confess Thee ONE in Truth and Love and Might;

And, holding by Thy Church's teaching clear
E'er since that upper chamber shook with fear,
Trace how Thy Three-fold energies appear!

Therefore, to-day, we keep the Festival
Whereto bright Pentecost and Easter call;
And, though no human thought may scale it all,

We, reverent, adore the Mystery
Of Triune Being and the Eternal see
Creator, Saviour, Comforter, in Thee!

[6] And not Egypt only, but the Chosen Race itself. It is agreed that the saving mark seen in the vision of the Prophet (Ezek. ix. 4.) was the sacred *Tau*,—a letter that, in the præ-Ezraïc chirography of the Hebrews, was itself a *Cross*.

First Sunday after Trinity.

SPIRIT-VISITINGS.

Low tones that on the Night-wind's sigh
So faintly through the casement creep,
Yet fearfully distinct and nigh
For wakeful care or dreamless sleep,—
Are ye but fancies of the brain,
Or music of a Spirit-train?—

Sometimes, so clear, so known as well
(Those Voices of long-parted Friends)
As if those Friends had come to tell
The secrets that the Tomb defends;
And then again, so strange and sweet
As nought on Earth our ears could meet!

And sometimes, too, when all is still
And slumber wraps the house around,
Come Shapes of those who used to fill

With light and love, the Homestead's bound;
—Silent, with earnest-gleaming eyes
That half light up Death's mysteries!

Float these from the dim, shadowy realm
That overlooks the mournful Past,
To warn us of the woes that whelm
Souls (like the Rich man's) lost at last?—
Or grow they but from hues that lie,
Self-blending, in our memory?

Ah! none can tell; for since the day
Man, serpent-led, preferred to *know*
More than in Paradise to stay,—
Less sapient all our senses grow,
And more confined and earthlier,
The orbit of our knowledge-sphere.

God, seen at no time, on His Throne
Sits, dark with an excessive light;
His angels, elder errands done,
Wing now to Earth no visible flight
Nor help t' unwrap from its dim veil
The grey Past or the Future pale.

Only His Word is with us yet,
A Witness and a Teacher true;
Only His Church o'er us is set,
With light our dark souls to imbue
And with His Sacraments' avail,
To pledge the cure of natures frail.

If these serve not, then all in vain
Will ghostlier warnings be and dread;
No pale Face or sad Voice again,
Returning with the white-clothed Dead,
No midnight Spirit-visitings,
Will break the chain, Earth o'er us flings!

Second Sunday after Trinity.

THE THREE PICTURES.

Three changing Pictures in the glass
Of God's dim Providence!
Three Figures, beckoning as they pass,
Ere melting in the vapory mass
That hides, more than with triple brass,
Time's march from our frail sense!

Not ours, to know the full extent
Of such portentous Forms;
We can but watch in wonderment
The awful brilliance that, unspent,
(Though age to age a veil has lent)
Still all the foreground warms.

We can but gaze, now, where the glow
Of the descending Sun
Leaves pleasant shadows, cool and low,
There where young trees green branches throw;
While yonder, through the mist, God's Bow
Makes sky and earth but one!

Ev'n as we look, a change comes o'er
That so delicious scene;
The irised hues that, just before,
Both Heaven's arch and the rain-drops wore,
Fade, and a twilight stern and hoar
Unfolds its dreary screen!

Deeper and deeper falls the Night;
Till the lone Worshipper —
Who sank in slumber 'neath the light
Of countless stars that pledged both Might
And Love, — wakes shuddering, in affright,
At the strange darkness there.

Once more the Canvass weird outpours
Fresh rays; — long since, the Sun
Has heard the first call of the flowers
And visits now their mid-day bowers:
While, round, the dark-haired Evening-hours
His chariot wait upon!

Who on the house-top lingering kneels,
As that great sheet unrolls?
While half-taught Faith the warrant steals

From what the Vision plain reveals
And what the possible Dream conceals
— God's Ark for human souls.

If, fainter than to Patriarch's gaze
Or to Apostle's eye,
Those visions loom in our late days;
At least for us a lustre plays
(Lit up from emblems of God's ways)
Their earlier times deny.

The Rain-bow blazons in the cloud
Our Baptism's covenant;
The Mount, where Abram darkly bowed,
Is Calvary where the Saviour stood;
The Church holds still the mystic Shroud —
Room there for all, to grant!

Such symbols she would have us store,
— Our Mother, tender, true;
Therefore, each day, she gleans them o'er,
Repeating from her elder lore
And tripling for our sakes (and more)
Their ancient strength, anew!

Third Sunday after Trinity.

THE PILGRIMS IN EGYPT.

As in some Day whose morning wakes
Mid sullen clouds or angry showers;
But, older grown, at length it breaks
The curtain of its early hours
And, looking from its throne of light,
Gilds all its Western pathway bright
—Throughout obeying laws, the great Creator makes:—

So doth Thy Church, O Lord, obey
The veiled plans Thyself hast laid;
As well when, on a troubled Day,
Ten brethren-hands were scarcely staid
From brother's blood as when, subdued,
Before their Victim, late, they stood,
More sorrowful than he, in anxious guilt to pray.

Thou did'st o'errule their anger rude,
When changeful Reuben's kindlier aim

And Midian's merchant-pilgrim brood,
As agents in Thy purpose, came;
The sad old man's bereaved sigh
Thou sufferedst, for the time was nigh
When near his son, long lost and loving, Israel stood!

We solve not all Thy deep intent:
We see a mighty Empire saved,
And Thine elect Race strangely sent
To bondage, that there might be graved
For the whole world, the wondrous proof
Of Love and Power in their behoof,
While sternest traits of wrath and softest gleams are blent!

We see Thy promise there made true,
Unhastened for long suffering years:
So, later, when from a wild crew
A CHILD, the Virgin-mother bears
To the same land, Thy time to bide —
Not less Thy pledge is verified
And out of Egypt, Thou did'st bring Thine own SON, too!

And when this exiled SON (more high
Than Joseph) not one realm or race

But mankind, in His ministry,
Should save and keep with Heavenly grace —
Dark storms of woe and violence
Scattered the precious seedlings, whence
The Christian harvest springs around us, far and nigh.

So, when the days of peril come
Upon the Church, as long foretold,
(Perhaps now here, amid our gloom
Of zeal deceived and love grown cold) —
Not less we deem, that promised light
Will gild her Western pathway bright
And with calm, clearest ray her latest hours, illume!

Fourth Sunday after Trinity.

THE SLEEP-WALKERS.

O, SOREST symptom of disease
When sick-men know it not!
O, words, the warmest hearts to freeze:
"His own sin he forgot!"

Yet word and symptom oft we meet
In our world-pilgrimage;
Forgetfulness and self-deceit
Crowd ev'n a hermitage.

Like men who walk forth in their sleep,
Pursuing some fond dream,
Unreasoned if they smile or weep —
Must we, poor wanderers, seem

To friendly Spirit-ministers
Who watch in that high sphere,
Where every faintest breath that stirs
Our thoughtless bosom here,

Goes widening on; — with each new ray,
A changeless verdict shown
For God to read — for us, one day,
To tremble as we own!

If one, more wakeful than the rest
In his sleep-walking, seems:
Not on himself he tries the test,
But on his fellows' dreams.

Not thankful for a little light
To lead him calmly home,
He but employs his feeble sight
To mark how others roam.

Blind leaders of the blind! — how true
His sentence, Who knew all
And loved all even as He knew!
— What wonder if we fall?

Nought but a spirit like Thine own,
Redeemer! — love, like Thine
— To whisper oft, with pitying tone,
"My brother's fall is mine" —

Can hold our frailty and convert
Our dimness into Day,
Where we may see our true desert,
Our thankless, devious way;

Where we may see the blind and lame
Cared for and cured by Thee,
—Love-gifts for all in want or shame,
All, but the Pharisee!

Lord, for the highest of these gifts,
Help us, each hour, to pray,
—The Charity that, mild, ev'n lifts
Harsh brethren on their way;

That beareth all things and forbears
To judge another's sin;
And, shrinking in itself, still hears
A gentle voice within:

"My Servant! thine own sickness learn;
Seek cure before the Even;
Be just, and thou shalt justice earn;
Forgive and be forgiven!"

Fifth Sunday after Trinity.

THE FISHERS.

"All night was cast the weary net
In vain; for, empty, lightly yet
Its mesh obeys the hand:
And sickened hope and toil contend
Our strength and courage, both, to bend
And make us yearn for land:

"Yet, at Thy word, we will again
Launch out the net upon the main:"—
So did the Fisher speak:
So speaks the Church in mournful tone;
And, from each praying heart alone,
So does its grief outbreak:

In twilight dim, at midnight still,
In gloomy vale, 'neath cloud-capped hill,
Under Thy Temple-shade,—

Have been poured out, with fainting breath,
Thoughts seeking Thee, and Prayer and Faith
Fast by Thine altar laid.

In the pure Deep of Thine own word
— O'er whose calm face might best be heard
Whispers of comfort nigh —
Our bark hath been ; its weary road,
Our vows, like nets, cast out abroad,
Have surely met Thine eye.

Yet, barren all, our net doth prove
(Though woven cords of truest love)
No weight of new-felt grace :
And mid the thick desponding gloom,
No morning-light breaks on our home,
No ray reveals Thy face :

Nor eddying wave that hurries past
— Laden with cares, waked by Life's blast —
(Fit emblem this, and wise)
Yet lingering long enough to show,
Though turbid, that there gleams below
The very prey we prize.

All night we toil; when, when, O God,
Shall we take up our lightsome load
For which we gladly bend?
When shall some lonely, earnest prayer,
Dove-like sent forth, returning bear
Blessings that Thou dost send?

In Thine own time!—still will we spread,
All darkling though it be and dread,
Our prayers before Thy shrine;
Breathing but this, O Lord, to Thee
—Where'er Thy holy steps we see,
To follow and be Thine!

Sixth Sunday after Trinity.

NATURE AND REVELATION.

Cold falls the snow on some November day;
Chill blows the breeze that clears the Morning's way;
But both, in kindness sent:—
One wraps from Winter's harm the buried seeds;
The other scatters the night-breath of weeds,
And airy poisons thus grow innocent!

But chiller, colder than or wind or snow,
Their maxims sad, who still refuse to know
God, by His own-told name
And, captivated in a sensuous maze,
Trace only forms that blend in evening-haze
Or worship at some Gheber morning-flame!

Created things they see — not Who creates:
An order, stern in beauty and that dates
Birth from no when or where:

A Nature, ever-bearing, never born;
An era from some self-made cycle torn;—
Such shadows, all they own as God-like, are.

No love to wake, no prayer to warm their hearts;
No hope to linger when all else departs;
No gleam beyond the grave;
—More worth, the superstitions wild that twine
Around the veiled Disposer's Grecian shrine [7]
And comfort trusting souls they fail to save.

Strange, as the world grows older, that more wise
It grows not; but, as years successive rise,
Rash spirits after spirits try
To follow roads none ever safely trod
And, building altars to an Unknown God,
Adore in blindness to 'scape mystery!

'Tis not enough, at Nature's fane to dream:
'Tis not enough, a God exists to deem;
He is and He rewards:
And to us, if we will or not, one Day
For every act and thought, for work or play,
His judgment just a verdict sure, accords.

Another clime is round that Judgment-seat.
We, pilgrims, hasten on, its breath to meet,
Like leaves upon the blast.
— Yet not the breath of Eden, nor the yield
Of flowers Elysian in sweet Enna's field,
Nor odors that the vines of Carmel cast!

None may presume to go there unafraid
Save Children; (not as Heathen Wise-ones said,[8]
But those) who die to sin
And, buried in the bright, baptismal wave,
Their portion with th' Incarnate Founder have
And rise, a share in *His* Sonship to win!

[7] *Disposer* is the English equivalent for the Name given by the Greeks to the Supreme.

[8] See Acts xvii. 28. The commentators generally have referred this to Aratus, the countryman of S. Paul. They should have included Musæus and Pindar; and as the Greek term (Poet, or Maker) was not confined to those who wrote in metre, and certainly not to those only whose surviving works are rhythmical, there is room also for Plato and Pythagoras.

Seventh Sunday after Trinity.

THE WILDERNESS.

O, aid me, FATHER, as I strive
Out from the world to come;
And in the Wilderness, O, give
Strength that may lead me home.
Long wandering, I have sought Thy face
And, thirsting, panted for Thy grace
—Some fresh reviving ray—
To guide me o'er each rugged steep
And thorny vale, that empire keep
Across my weary way!

Thy footsteps sometimes, still, I see;
And, o'er the cool night air,
Low, distant voices come from Thee
—A promise unto prayer:

But long the way and strong the toil,
And earnest foes would yet beguile
The Pilgrim from his road;
While, far, full many a tempting scene
Uprises on the view between
The Wanderer and his God!

What wonder, then, if languid there
I cling unto the Earth;
Or turn aside, in fierce despair,
To scenes of reckless mirth?
What wonder then if, losing Thee,
Naught mid the mist and dews I see
But dark, portentous Forms;
Or, glittering through the earth-born haze,
Upon some fiery breath I gaze,
That lightens not nor warms?

By all the hopes that ever sprung
From my lone heart to Thee;
By all the vows, o'er which were flung
Faith's robes of purity;
By every prayer that inly strove,
And every grief that kindly wove

Some Heaven-descended chain;—
I cling to Thee Who wert *their* guide,
The Tremblers near the swelling tide,
—The Murmurers on the plain.

O, teach me, when I follow Thee,
If fainting by the way,
Through all, with patient hope, to see
Thyself my certain stay:
And, gathering up each broken prayer
And wasted vow, assemble there
(As in the Wild of old)
A feast that may the soul renew
And fragments on the way to strew,
When Love is growing cold!

Eighth Sunday after Trinity.

THE PASSAGE OF THE RED SEA.

"Why stand ye here and gaze
Upon that sullen Sea?
Where the early sun-beam plays
As brightly as in other days,
Unmarked by any shuddering phase
Like that which, yester-eve, corpse-strewed the coral lea.

"Say, do ye love to mark
His hand that surely led
O'er a wilder sea, the Ark;
And, in a pilgrimage as dark,
Lone Jacob, guided safe and stark,
With light of Angel-dreams round his stone-pillowed head?

"Or do ye, grateful, dwell
(With hearts to change no more)
On the wonders that so well

Broke worshipped Isis' strongest spell;
While princely hall and prisoners' cell [store?
Learned, in a First-born lost, your trampled birth-right's

"O Fancy, fitful, frail!
Hearts, helpless, frailer still!
—Lo, beneath your foreheads pale
(More blanched from every sickening gale)
God reads the brain-inscribed tale
Of miracles misjudged, of murmuring, proud self-will!

"Nine times, the morning bright
Wakes th' Erythræan wave;
And, like melting sea-mists' flight,
The awful vows to-day ye plight,
At Mara vanish out of sight
—Recalled but by the sign of God's great plan to save!

"Scarce cease the Angelic crew
For this their anthem high,
Ere ye claim a wonder new:
—I see the Wild all white with dew;
'Tis Angels' food from Heaven for you,
To win you from the chain of Egypt's luxury!

"Lo! Sinai's lightning-glare
Still to your strained eyes shines;
Spirit-trumpets echo there:
Yet whence is this procession fair,
While women's voices charm the air?
—O, more than falsest false, ye build foul Apis' shrines!

"Giver of prophet-ken,
Blind me upon this strand;
Hide, oh! hide that quaking plain
— CHRIST'S symbol lifted there in vain —
And bleaching bones, that long have lain,
Of wanderers shut at last out from Thy promised Land!"

So sighed, on Edom's shore,
One of the Pilgrim-host;
One who prophet-unction wore
And read the Future, sad and sore,
That all GOD'S love, proved and in store,
Could not redeem — by men's wild pride and passion lost!

Do we, in this late day,
(By emblems led, as true)
Shudder o'er their thankless way? —

Alas, how our own hearts betray!
Our deeds our parentage display;
We but build sepulchres for those our fathers slew!

Like them, we tread a strand
That wrathful tokens strew;
More than Moses' Baptist-hand
Has signed and sealed us where we stand;
While, wider over sea and land,
Our fires of Pentecost their guiding flame renew!

The Wilderness of Sin
Holds both our marches slow;
Thirsty pilgrims faint within:
But ah! what higher meed we win,
Who drink where gracious streams begin,
From not the smitten Rock but CHRIST's pierced side, to flow!

And if Archangels' bread
For them in sweet dew fell;
Are not we divinely fed?
Does not a mystery more dread
Half-shrine the chancel where we tread
And see, in symbols meek, a real Presence dwell?

Lord of such grace and love,
If we, by self beguiled,
Shameless o'er vows broken prove, —
At least let dread our spirits move
To shun their sin who with Thee strove —
Who, mid the Red Sea saved, yet perished in the Wild!

Ninth Sunday after Trinity.

THE CENSER OF THE CHURCH.

Yes! hold thy censer 'twixt the Dead and Living,
By fire to show forth Life — by ashes, Death;
Its vaporous wreaths, still upwards lightly striving,
Are transient as Man's quickly fleeting breath;
Yet offered as God saith,
With due rite and firm faith,
His wrath it stayeth or it sweeteneth!

Type, thou, of power more holy than aught human!
Foreshadowing function of that Priest Most High
Who, in times later, came (true God, and true Man,
And so, to both in kin and feeling, nigh)
To stand alone between
Men dead in utter sin
And the avenging, Living Deity!

Hence is it, from the grace of Christ's anointing,
That priestly hands work in such wondrous way;

And that, within the Church of His appointing,
Mere outward forms exert such latent sway;
They do but Him reflect,
They borrow from His act
The potency, all things create obey.

Like Israel in the Wilderness of Paran,
The Church counts all her cloud and sea baptise;
While chosen Ones, called, separate, like Aaron,
The sinners watch, who their own souls despise,
And holy vessels bear,
With incense of fond prayer,
To make atonement as Sin's plague-spots rise!

Yet, spite the watch o'er the mixed congregation,
Beneath His eye that sees without, within,
(Whose love or wrath claims now no race nor nation)
Pride will break forth and judgment follow sin;
And, though no visible scourge
The Church's ranks may purge,
A death as hopeless doth its victims win.

Woe to those Victims! but *their* fate how awful
Whose hearts, like Korah's, scorn an humble place;

And, deeming aught above their sphere, unlawful,
Seek for their noisy gifts a wider space:
These meet no common end,
Who know not how to blend
Their priestly power with its meek, sweetest grace!

For others, too, there waits as deep perdition
—The Dathans who CHRIST's 'stablished order slight—
And warrant to themselves a full commission
In each distempered Voice or wandering Light:
They see Damascus hold
The Apostle keen and bold,
But not the trembling Saint and dazzled sight!

But deepest, saddest, is the gloom unending
Of those who have, with Balaam, earlier worn
An unction from on high; till, one day bending
To earthly pomp or wealth or lust, they scorn
Their simple, holy cell
(Where Angels fain might dwell)
To join Earth's strife and win a heart forlorn!

Tenth Sunday after Trinity.

THE WO OF BALAAM.

Not for all the breath of incense burning,
Not for all the life of victims slain,
Not for every altar whence returning
Still thou hop'st some vantage-ground to gain —
Not for these or more,
Does His mercies' store
Fail those who His chosen Race remain!

While the flame in Zophim leaps the highest,
Come no answering flashes from above;
O'er enchantments vainly sped, thou sighest
In the verge of Peor's haunted grove;
— Mightier far than aught
Weird familiars brought,
— Stronger than all elfin-spells, God's love!

So, thine eyes, untranced mid arts unholy,
Mark the Star of Jacob's destiny

Gilding Judah's sceptre, till it slowly
Pales at its twin-sister of the sky;
Whose pure, orient gleam
Glows with Shiloh's beam,
Whose sphere holds the Righteous when they die![9]

So, thy lips, with more touched than thou knewest,
Wider than Canaän's fate reveal;
And thy words, not so meant, but yet truest
Verdict for the race of Adam, seal:
Breathing, high and low,
Tones of joy and wo,
Veiling what years yet unborn conceal.

Sad thy mission, Son of Beor, favored
With a more than mortal sight and word!
Sadder that, when thus sent, thou hast wavered
O'er thy pagan rites, to meet the Lord!
Saddest that, when met,
Wilful counsel yet,
Lucre-led, thy false heart could afford!

Do I judge thee, Prophet deeply erring?
Dare I strike a note, than Grief's more stern?

— Nay! more gracious baptism than thine, wearing
Let me rather mine own lesson learn:
(Doleful yet true chime
For all Christian time)
Balaam's sin shall wo like Balaam's earn!

[9] It was a patristical idea which a poet may be excused for tolerating, that the Star of the Magi (the veritable Star of Jacob that Balaam saw) was the abode of the disembodied spirits of the Righteous, who shall be hereafter recalled from such planetary limbo.

Eleventh Sunday after Trinity.

THE PUBLICAN'S PRAYER.

O! Merciful, within Thy temple kneeling,
Let me not bring my heart's vain treasures there;
Nor as I bend, one taint of earthly feeling
Enter to desecrate Thine House of prayer;
But, as I hear Thy word Thy will revealing,
Let me be bowed as where Thyself hast trod;
I look to Thee, each wound, each sorrow healing,—
I pray to Thee; Be merciful, O God!

I know that many watch their chains upon me,
Sinful and strong, ev'n in Thy courts to fling;
I know how often from those courts have won me
Some wandering tone, some moth with painted wing;
I miss the sparkles of Thy baptism on me,
Exhaled or stained in all its holy flood;
Each day, all holier thoughts and spirits shun me;
—I can but pray: Be merciful, O God!

For all, with trembling steps, as Time is stealing,
Still would I hasten to Thine House of prayer,
That, as I bend myself, no sin concealing,
Soul, body, spirit, all be prostrate there;
And, as I hear Thy word Thy will revealing,
Let me bow down as where Thyself hast trod;
I look to Thee, each wound, each sorrow healing; —
I pray to Thee: Be merciful, O God!

Twelfth Sunday after Trinity.

LETTER AND SPIRIT.

Long years, O Mother, since the Elect ones
First decked thee with their many-colored pall;
And, in the Wilderness, thy wandering sons
Vowed by thy graven law to stand or fall
— To follow cheerfully at their Redeemer's call!

They saw thee glowing in thy youthful prime,
Ere yet a tear was shed o'er children lost;
And fervid, as became their Eastern clime,
The worship from embattled Israel's host,
Ere yet their tents were pitched on green Canaän's coast.

Yet so it lasted not; ere long out-broke,
As once at Massah, proud and selfish wills
That murmured even when their Maker spoke;
— Alas, to find out soon, by sharpest ills,
Though merciful the Law, that yet its letter kills!

So do we find it still, now earlier rites
Melt in a form as glorious, more serene;
When a Veiled Prophet now no more invites
His shuddering Tribes to gaze on Sinai's sheen,
Or frail High-priest need stand, Man and his God between.

If changed the Law, the Giver is the same;
Like is the fruit when green again the tree;
Still burn our hearts, in Israel's rebel flame,
—Seeking at the right hand of power to be,
Meting by hours on Earth, lots in Eternity!

O, Heart of mine, that sadly lingers where
The gloomy plain with spectral shades is rife,
And all good deeds shapes foul, repulsive, wear—
Take courage still amid th' appalling strife:
—Howe'er the Letter kills, the Spirit can give Life!

Thirteenth Sunday after Trinity.

THE MOURNING OVER JERUSALEM.

Know'st thou that Voice whose tender tone
Calls souls, God wants to make His own,
And, mid Man's fierce or careless slight,
Breathes sweetly like some breeze at night
That scatters perfume where it sweeps
And whispers calmness as it sleeps?

"Jerusalem, Jerusalem,
Who kill'st thy prophets — stonest them
That come to teach thee! Ah, how oft
Would I, than parent-bird more soft,
Have drawn thy children near and got
Food for their need; but thou wouldst not!"

So fell the strain, one weary day,
The Saviour stopped Him on His way,
To mark and wither with His word

Th' unreadiest to know their LORD:
— A pitying close, to warn and win
All, but th' unpardonable sin!

'Twas morning, as His footsteps fell
On Kedron's prophet-storied dell;
The dusky olive greener glowed,
The yellow fig more golden showed,
And lowliest flowers all jewelled grew,
For giving back fresh Day-light's hue!

All Nature sang; but, to His ear
Who made all, not so true or clear
Did that unvoiced World-music seem;
For, ever since Earth's Eden-dream,
Our Nature-worship needs ally
— Man's Love — to make it harmony!

With *that,* might Nature, glad, once more
Renew the type that Eden wore;
— No fitful seasons' varying sway;
No creeping Age's slow decay;
Nor faculties, with toil grown weak,
That rest, to bloom again, must seek;

But all at once, leaf, flower and fruit;
No more the fig-tree, conscious, mute,
Need tremble as its LORD comes by
Or, for Man's learning, fade and die;
But flesh and grass, in boundless range,
From bright to brighter glory change!

Would we the lesson rightly read,
It tells us of the earnest heed
Our daily barrenness demands,
And of the sentence sharp that stands
To be revealed on some sad Day
When CHRIST shall pass along our way!

Nor less the import of the woes,
If mysteried, the words disclose
Against those souls whose worldly art
But compasses a worldly part;
Whose discord with GOD's love supplies,
No note in Nature's harmonies.

Ah! hopeless every Heaven-ward aim,
Did not a gracious Voice proclaim
The marvel of GOD's suffering —

How Faith and Love again may string
Our broken harp till, true and well,
A perfect diapason swell!

List, then, and learn that tender tone
Assuring us God seeks His own:
He, who could weep o'er Judah's race,
To humbler hearts no scanty grace
Will scatter from His sparkling wing,
Safe underneath, those hearts to bring!

Fourteenth Sunday after Trinity.

THE ANTE-CHAMBER.

If, from that deep, unknown abyss
Whose bosom holds both wo and bliss,
Again those souls looked forth, once prisoned here;
How would one glance, could Man but bear
Their gaze, who know all, seem to wear
A teaching, true and sad, of danger near.

Unready and unwise, they say,
If careless, as Day glides by Day,
We slumber till the awful Bridegroom come:
Ungrateful, if the thought arise
To weigh each little sacrifice
And with one talent buy our long, long home!

Alas! in that dark list of crime
First entered when, in Earth's green prime,
Man thanked, but with a brother's blood, his God—

Not only sleep or buried gifts
(Whose whited cerements, cold Death lifts)
Invoke on us the stern Avenger's rod!

Nine times, the Son of God, in vain,
Removed the kneeling leper's stain,
(Healed, had there breathed one grateful feeling there;)
While erst, amid the Chosen race,
Their Saviour's glory, face to face,
Was dimmed before their idol-song and prayer!

Nor strange, when blessings, thrice declared,
No softer made the hearts that dared
To murmur at the meat their Maker gave; —
When not the dying odors, shed
Around the Prophet's unbent head,
Could scent the flowing of Meribah's wave!

O God! not a sad Spirit's look,
Nor vision, nor unsealed Book
Warmed by prophetic search until made plain,
Need we, to see the wo and want,
The duty and the fear that haunt
This solemn vestibule of endless gain!

Happy, if as we wait Thee here,
Each poor man's sigh, each mourner's tear
Awake in us Thy heaven-taught sympathy:
But happier if, all watchings past,
(When gathered near Thy throne at last)
We find *their* grateful debt o'erpaid by Thee!

Fifteenth Sunday after Trinity.

THE COVENANT-STONE.

Thou art the same, — Who watched of old
Thy peaceful Race draw nigh;
When lance's point and banner-fold
Gleamed idly to the sky;
When, gathered round the hallowed Stone,
— Their Leader's solemn warnings done —
Their oft repeated pledges own
Love that would never die!

Thou art the same, — now other rites
New vows, new service, bring;
Now that Thy chosen Israel fights
Against no earthly king,
Thou still rewardest, as of old,
Thy warrior servants' bearing bold
— Their hearts to Idol-worship cold
But warm, by Thine to cling!

Thine Eye yet sees the Covenant-stone
(Fresh planted by Thy hand)
A witness of the Faith we own,
Elect and living, stand:
Wo worth the day, the Church forgets
The sign which of her truth it sets
Or, blind and frail, in friendship meets
Where stranger-types command!

Thou claimest allegiance, yet, as true,
Devotion more entire;
And dost our way with symbols strew
That faith and love inspire;
— Green fields all waving from few seed,
The spicy tree's refreshing shade,
The cheerful birds whom Thou dost feed,
All lead our prospects higher!

Lord, — Who can blend, as erst so now,
Blessings and mournful ill, —
Aid us to keep the faith we vow,
Help us our vows to fill!
When Mammon tempts us to his sway
O, let it not our trust betray;

And, if storms vex our closing day,
Do Thou the Ocean still!

And when, a Gentile Church, at last
We crowd Thy shrine on high;
— Our well-tried weapons' uses past,
Or gleaming idly by,
A new Canaan all our own,
Our Leader's glorious promise won, —
Let us but hear His blissful tone:
"For Love that ne'er can die!"

Sixteenth Sunday after Trinity.

THE JUDGE BEHIND THE DOOR.

O, Lesson wisely to all hearts addressed!
Well may we keep it folded to our breast
Till all its power we catch,
— The meanings deep that in its few words live,
(No more, the Saviour saw it fit to give)
"I say to each one: Watch!"

Is it not little that the Master asks?
— No unpaid toil, no arbitrary tasks,
No penance for our Fall;
But simply that with ears, Love open keeps,
With eye that, e'en if closed, expectant sleeps,
We wait His promised call!

Say, had He bid us ever on our feet
To stand, like trembling pris'ners, soon to meet
Th' Avenger of our sin;

Could we have murmured, — we who, every day,
Teach one another more to drive astray
The souls He wants to win?

We can be wakeful in our least concerns:
— See, if, by chance, some shepherd-fire o'erburns,
How many eyes to gaze!
Or if we seek some petty Earth-lord's smile,
How cheerfully, though sick at heart the while,
His caprice claims our days!

Or if, with aims less selfish and less low,
We long one line of Nature's laws to know,
How wait we for dim light;
While yonder, wandering through some Pleiad-dance,
A prouder soul grows, in his star-fed trance,
Companion to the Night!

O, say not, then, our MAKER overtasks
The strength He gave, when it all-nerved He asks,
— Not for some winged wealth;
Not, hour by hour, to watch a bud expand;
Not, ever sea-rocked, still to sail round land;
Not, for our neighbor's health,

To search mid poisons for new life-defence
Or, year by year, to track the pestilence;
To dare electric fire;
Or, while the sight grows dim, spite optic art,
To count through weary nights, with wearier heart
How other Worlds expire: —

But, with philosophy most calm and true,
To seek our highest gain in what we do;
To nurse our own heart-flowers;
From every passion-tempest, learn the more
To steer our life-bark to a stormless shore;
To test the healing powers

Of medicines no human hand compounds
(God's ordinances curing all soul-wounds;)
And, — since ere long the Veil
Will surely fall, to shut out from our sight
Earth-scenes — to read in every watching night
That Star which does not fail!

O, warned in time, let not your lamps grow dim;
Though ye believe not, yet ye wait on Him,
The Judge behind the Door:

He, if He hide it from His Angels' ken,
Reveals each instant to some Child of men
His Coming's awful hour!

And we, the early called in Childhood's faith,
Or, more mature, along the Church's path
Led, by her teaching true,
To learn a lesson from the falling leaf,
From all life-tokens ev'n more frail and brief,
— Lord, what shall these men do? —

Help us to stand like such as wait for Thee;
Forever longing in Thy train to be;
As for some Bridal, dressed;
And reckoning, by the alternate light and gloom
That, sent by Thee, plays o'er our World and home
And heart, our hour of rest;

Till the glad moment comes that, ushered in
By Death, th' obedient Servants' meed we win
And the best import catch
(Last, understood by souls in bliss alone,)
Of Thy deep warning words, now fully known,
"Blessed are those that watch!"

Seventeenth Sunday after Trinity.

THE PASSPORT.

Straight is the gate and narrow is the way
To Life, that leadeth!
Dark-robed and stern, to quench our short-lived Day
The drear Night speedeth!
To that dim strife and sore, O! who shall say
What gloom succeedeth,
And what strong, gentle Hand to be our stay,
Our spirit needeth?

When Morn is young, it, 'twixt dew-gem and flower,
Our gaze divideth;
More late, Earth's glare or dust, her wind or shower
Heaven's dim path hideth;
Old-age hath passed it, or with failing power
Helpless abideth; —
Lord, how a turning leaf, a shade, an hour
Our lot decideth!

Full many seek in vain to enter in
Thy Gate-way lowly, —
Seek; but not strive, therefore they fail to win
Their guerdon wholly.
'Tis not enough (though good-will to begin
Is Thy gift solely)
We hear Thy teaching or leave off some sin,
To make us holy:

We have not won the way, though we may prove
Thy baptism given;
Nor, though the pledges of Thy dying love
We taste here, even;
But more than these — O, keep Thou, Holiest Dove,
Souls that have striven
As Thou command'st, and guide them from above
To enter Heaven!

Eighteenth Sunday after Trinity.

THE PRODIGAL SON.

Once, when Summer's light was low
In the distant West;
And purple Twilight, creeping slow,
Stole, tint by tint, the Evening's glow;
Where rich clustering vines did grow,
I laid me down to rest.

And then slumber, unperceived,
O'er me listless, fell;
I saw no more where vines, thick-leaved,
Sweet glimpses of the light received,
Or where branches interweaved
Quaint syllables, to spell.

But my sense, a new clime woo'd
With strange scenery;
—Far off, there gleamed Tiberias' flood,

While, darkly shading where I stood,
Hermon rose, all crowned with wood,
Against the Eastern sky.

Yet the look of gleam and shade,
Lake and storied dell,
(With child-lore, half-familiar made)
Charmed not my gaze from one weird glade
Where the very birds, afraid,
Spared their song-dreams to tell!

Soon I knew why silent there,
When I looked more nigh;
A Man, — true image of despair —
Had made within his hopeless lair,
Till the heavy, stagnant air
Had sickened with his sigh!

There he writhed — no tear, no cry —
For a weary space;
When, sharp athwart the brilliant sky,
The shadow of a Dove went by
And, a moment, seemed to lie
On his pallid face.

I know not what slumbering chord
Of his soul, it woke
Or what long-buried memories, stored
Within his brain, like fire were poured;
But with firm, reflected word
And gentle tears, he spoke:

"Better those who humbly earn
Bread at home, than I;
Repentant, there I will return,
Not son-like, but to service stern;
Father! pardon now, nor spurn
Slow-learning misery!"

As he said this, one might see
Nature understood;
And breaking forth in sympathy,
(As longing all the time, to be
In accord) sweet minstrelsy
Rang through the enchanted wood.

Sweeter, every swelling tone
For the hush before;
More brilliant, all the rich tints thrown

Upon the landscape, till it shone
Too intense to gaze upon;
— I slumbered then no more.

And the vine-leaves hanging low,
As at first, I found;
But mellow Eve's retreating glow
Was lost in dusky Twilight now,
Where quaint shadows come and go
Half guest-, half ghost-like, round.

And a low, clear whisper came
(Through my bones it ran)
As if a Spirit called my name:
"Poor Sleeper! 'twas not all a dream
— That sad glade, that wan One's shame;
My Son! Thou art the Man!"

Nineteenth Sunday after Trinity.

THE DEDICATION.

"And will the Lord indeed
Dwell on the earth, He made?—
He Who, for fitting Court, would need
The Heaven of Heavens where Angels heed
His glance, will He endure this human Temple's shade?"

So breathed the strain one day
From Mankind's Wisest son;
While kneeling millions round him lay
Before a shrine, so rich, to pray,
That human Art well nigh a rank Divine, had won!

Not in distrust or scorn,
So doubtful rose his prayer;
No ghostly fear or pride forlorn,
But a humility inborn,
With pearls of Wisdom set, decks his devotion rare.

But now, in later days
Of hopeless, heartless gleam,
Men, lost in philosophic maze,
— Too learned to love, too proud to praise,
Too free for faith — of gifts without a Giver, dream!

While some, less bold than these,
A God above them own;
But in cold Reason's chamber freeze
And worshipping (not on their knees
But in the spirit,) set Self on an Idol-throne!

Guard us from such extremes,
Lord of all Truth and Grace;
Alike, from superstitious dreams,
And from wild, pantheistic schemes
And from *their* creed, who put Man's feelings in Thy place!

Teach us, all glad, to pay
The blushing Vineyard's due;
At Cæsar's feet, his own to lay;
And, on the World's thick-crowded way,
To learn their lineaments, who bear Thy tokens true!

So, though no outward shrine,
With Israel's king, we build,
A pledge and share of Life divine
In pure, obedient hearts shall shine,
Till, like that olden House, those hearts with Thee be filled!

And if it be, at first,
A Cloud that hides from Thee;
A little while — it is dispersed,
And o'er the heedful soul will burst,
The Day-star's promised beam, to bid the darkness flee.

Then may we say, indeed,
(More wise, more humble made,)
"He Who, for fitting Court, does need
The Heaven of Heavens where Angels heed
His glance, can yet endure poor, human Temples' shade!"

Twentieth Sunday after Trinity.

THE PRAYER OF ELIAS.

Whose is the breath, so sweet, so pure,
That will not soil Thy shrine?
Whose suppliant hands, canst Thou endure
To see before Thee twine?
Whose is the faith, so calm, so sure,
To ask for aught of Thine?
— Alas, our stains are wide and deep;
Within, foul Memories their dreary vigil keep!

The snow-drops bright, all trustful, peep
Up mid the sheer ice-field;
The juicy vines, untrelliced, creep
And folded tendrils shield;
The violets on yon mossy steep
Delicious odor yield;
But not ev'n fragrant violet
Nor clasping vine nor fearless snow-drop are we yet!

And *these* have not, like us, to bring
Crushed hopes and languid cares
To Thee, or chords unnerved to string
Afresh with voiceless prayers;
Their duteous, life-long offering
But praise for burden bears;
While *we*, as thankless still as poor,
Each moment feel thy help — each moment need it more!

If, in the glowing page we read
The tale of Prophet's power;
To whom, the obedient clouds gave heed,
Three years forbid to shower;
And who the parted soul could lead
Back, after Death's worst hour;
— Slight claim to prophet-grace have we
His children, who once thought to hide himself from Thee!

Yet from that storied page we learn
A lesson true and high;
If gifts so large, our Race could earn,
When all was shadowy,
How freer, brighter far, they turn
Since His humanity,

Who each faint sigh in Heaven presents
As kindest Son of Man and, Son of God, then grants!

For, ever since the chosen Few
Watched once His cloud-borne way,
The drops they caught, of falling dew
In fonts baptismal stay;
And virtues, recked not of, imbue
With a mysterious sway
The simple food He blest and brake
That elements of Earth might thence Heaven's own hue take!

Thus cleansed, thus fed, we need not hide
In hopelessness, our sin;
But follow where the Crucified
Leads His regenerate kin;
And, though our prayers may not betide
The prophet's meed to win,
Dews yet more gracious heed our word
And souls, once dead in sins, are to new Life restored.

Thus called, thus blest, our breath grown pure
Fears not to soil Thy shrine;

Our suppliant hands are clasped secure
Where'er Thine altars shine;
And kindling faith, serene and sure,
Makes us all but divine;
— Without, CHRIST's footfall stills the Deep,
Within, we wait for Him and pleasant vigils keep!

Twenty-first Sunday after Trinity.

THE RIVERS OF DAMASCUS.

He stood beside the door
Of the lone house and poor,
(Wherein the Prophet chanced awhile to dwell)
In Eastern vizier-pomp,
With chariot and clear trump,
The praise of Israel's healing God to swell!

But forth, no wizard came,
Pale-cheeked, with eye of flame;
No form, evoked by magic art, was seen;
A daily servitor
The simple message bore:
"Go, seven times wash in Jordan and be clean!"

How often, since that day,
The world hath seen the sway
Of pride, the same that fired the Syrian's breast

Ev'n now, we sinners turn
Away and God's plan spurn,
If not just what Man dares to deem the best.

And, though in other words,
Our verdict still accords
With the rude soldier's self-deceiving zeal;
Some vague and sensuous dream,
Some dear Abana's stream,
We hold more worth than Gospel-grace, to heal!

Lord of all Form and Power!
Why dim, unto this hour,
Are all Thy lines, marked in both works and word?
Why does our Faith so late
For signs and wonders wait,
As if calm order less showed forth the Lord?

Why ask we that it be
A sudden leprosy
To mark, Gehazi-like, the selfish sin?
Or that, before our eyes,
Stern Azrael arise
To smite, as erst, th' Assyrian camp within?

Needs it a visible Dove,
Font-hovering, to prove
The virtue rare of the Baptismal wave?
Or must we, sceptic, wait
Until the Judgment-seat,
To see Thy Body raise *ours* from the grave?

Thou canst shed o'er a sign
The simplest, power Divine
To work the wonders of Thy Love or Wrath;
Be ours such signs to learn
Nor, with Naaman, spurn
The easy rites that mark Salvation's path!

Twenty-second Sunday after Trinity.

THE ETERNITY OF THE GOSPEL.

Who hath not felt the bliss of new-born Day
Along its glowing way;
And, drinking of its countless, airy wells,
Owned their enchanting spells;
Nor thought how each fresh-rising, fragrant Morn
Hastes to that long-pledged bourne
Where neither Sun's bright beam, nor Star's calm ray,
But Light more heavenly still, shines endless on the way?

Ev'n so, each period in the Church's life
(Though waking to new strife)
Marks the sure progress of the Eternal Will
That weaves, unhindered still,
(Whether amid a luscious landscape's gleam
Or lurid cloud and flame)

The varied web that ever to His Eye
Lies all outspread at once, while myriad ages fly.

Not Man's, to know the pictures that it holds
In undeveloped folds;
Save when, from GOD's own glance reflected, gleams
Shine on some prophet's dreams;
As, once, the Father of the Faithful saw
CHRIST's glad Day and new Law,
Or passed before the Babylonish Seer
Men's Empires o'er their kind, in living shapes of Fear.

Now, since that gracious, purer Day hath risen
Upon our earth-bound prison,
Less needed (and so, quenched) is prophet-light;
But not left to the Night
Of dark forebodings and of duties dim,
Unmarked, unblest by Him,
Are we; for, by His manifested word,
We learn and treasure up the portents of the LORD!

With more of grace, to help our faint, frail aim,
Than prescient seers could claim;

With more than Light, to shine along our way,
— Ev'n Endless Life's clear ray;
With holiest pledge, that who His will doth do
Shall know the Good and True: —
We deeper pierce, than Hebrew sage, the scroll
And watch a fate serene, when worlds unlearn to roll!

The Merciful, He leaves not those alone
Whom He has made His own;
But as, once, lions in their Persian den
Became more tame than men,
At His command; and (be we reverent here)
As He was ever near
The Son of Man in more than human straits, —
His presence still round those who love to please Him, waits!

Nor is the way to please Him, dim or hard;
But brilliant with reward:
— The law of love, that Cain once fiercely broke
With fratricidal stroke;
Th' example, that but sinless ones alone
May cast at Guilt the stone;
The warning, lest our pardons count by seven;
The threat, not to forgive is to be not forgiven!

Such is the Gospel-law, the Saviour brought;
That, e'en ere Eden-taught,
Ran, chainlike, through what is and is to be
In our World-history;
Now, shedding o'er some scene celestial light
Now, quenched in heathen night;
But serving always fitly as the key
Of Time's dim, solemn march on to Eternity!

Twenty-third Sunday after Trinity.

THE TREE OF KNOWLEDGE.

In Eden, when the Earth was new,
Two trees not far asunder grew;
One Knowledge bore, — the other, Life;
As if, then, was begun the strife
How heavenly bliss might best be won,
— Whether by intellect alone
Or by Obedience, to prove
A fitness for those realms where Life is fed on Love!

We know too well that Eden-choice;
We hear, each day, too plain the Voice
That whispered lofty promise there:
"Ye shall not die; — another sphere,
More safe and high, awaits their tread
Who dare on Wisdom's fruit to feed:
One taste — one step — and ye shall grow
As Gods yourselves, like Him, both good and ill to know!"

Since then, that earliest dream all o'er,
We, children, wander by the shore
Of Time's vast sea, and watch afar
The gleaming (like some distant star)
Of Cherub-swords that guard and show
The Paradise shut from us now,
— Condemned, how perilous to prove,
How sorrowful *their* lot, who rather know than love!

Nor is it only Man's wild will
That thus is paid; but Knowledge still
Has, in its nature, Sorrow's seed.
Else wherefore was the Wise king's meed,
With all his search, but Vanity?
And (higher, apter instance) why
Was He, the all-prescient One, the while
He dwelt with us on Earth, seen never once to smile?

Wrapped in His words the Truth doth lie,
(Perhaps made into Truth, thereby)
"If blind, ye should be without sin;"
And thence, as consequence, we win —
"If sinless, without sorrow too;"
For every heart that Sin doth woo

And win, full soon to see, is fain,
Sharp, unfamiliar Griefs ev'n in its bridal-train.

So, Light and Crime and Suffering stand,
Three Mighties, linkèd hand in hand
And haunting every avenue
That mortals tread, in various hue;
— Now, to scale Heaven, they tempt the mind,
— Now, sense, with pleasures less refined;
But leading sure their votaries
To some such steep as where the baffled Titan lies!

O, riddle hardest to be read!
O, mystery most near, most dread!
— Undying souls, (so far divine)
Encased in such a mortal shrine;
E'er struggling with transcendant aims
While Earth, each hour, its tribute claims;
Ev'n as they burn to pass the skies,
Polluting, with strange fire, their holiest sacrifice!

O Light, enough to miss the way —
Knowledge, that just can lead astray —

Would ye were either less or more!
— So speaks my heart; but from the store
Of Scripture, comes another tone:
"My Servant! leave such doubts alone;
Seek but to *do* as I command,
In hope and love; the rest is safe within My hand!"

Else, every Morn's returning light,
The Seasons' many colored flight,
The wonders that our frame disclose
And, (stranger still) the fire that glows
Within, — each trace that God has given,
Our wandering minds to point to Heaven —
Mislead the souls they were to guide,
Till Nature's brightest works her Maker only hide!

'Tis only, when the humbled heart,
With conscience soft, will do its part, —
Accepting, first, revealed lore;
Then, if it venture to explore
Creation-marvels, quick to find
Christ's light without which all are blind —
That Man another taste may claim
Of Fruit which, Eden-touched, turned to consuming Flame!

Twenty-fourth Sunday after Trinity.

HYPOSTASIS.

Two dew-drops, run together;
Two clouds that, floating, blend in summer-weather;
Two smoke-wreaths, upward driven,
That mingle ere they melt away tow'rds Heaven;
Two voices, but one tone;
Two hearts — ah! leave those hearts alone,
Nor dream in human types to see
The semblance of the harmony
That, (echoing notes, O! Saviour, Thine
In Thine abasement's mystery)
Breathes, in regenerate Man, the Human and Divine!

Ev'n those works where God's finger
Has left its traces, not so marred, to linger;
Or where His shadow falling
Makes outlines still, though dim, Himself recalling;
— The gentle drops of dew,
The vapors melting out of view,

The harmless air whose tones are heard
As when by leaves in Eden stirred, —
These serve but faint half-thoughts to bode
(Unfettered all by rhyme or word)
Of the high union that new-forms us sons of God!

O, words, so strange, so awful!
Well might we deem their utterance still unlawful,—
Fit but for Psalmist's lyre
Or wisest King or loved Apostle higher — [10]
If He, all Three Who taught,
Had not, one day, rebuked such thought;
Bidding the illy-reverent Jew
Confess the Scriptures that he knew;
And, to His Church now still more kind,
Bestowing an assurance true
On loving souls that, glad, room for His Spirit find.

But lest some fond thought, hidden,
Should cheat our hopes, clad in a shape forbidden;
Or life-long cherished error,
Dissolving one day at Death's touch in terror,
Our sad mistake should prove,—
Lo, gleaming lines of tenderest love

Betoken where that Spirit is;
And, by clear visible sympathies,
Afford this test, external, true,
Of whence our hopes regenerate rise:
Who loves God and is loved, must love his Brother, too!

Thus, following Christ's example,
We come to share with Him, His heirdom ample.
The Son of God, most Holy,
Became the Son of Man, despised and lowly;
And, spite His thankless kin,
Poured out His love and life to win
For us the door of a new fold:
So, we, the sons of men, enrolled
Among His sacramental host,
Though a mysterious grace untold,
Grow to be the sons of God — gain more than Adam lost!

No figure this, but real!
And, though the curious heart, that longs to see all,
Misdoubts our secret treasure
And deems that aught Divine should act at pleasure,
(While we are fettered still,)
We patiently our tasks fulfil;

Waiting until *He* comes again,
Whose Manhood, once bowed down with pain,
Is pattern of what ours shall be;
For mingling in His rapturous train
We glorious grow like Him, Whom as He is, we see!

[10] See Ps. lii. 6. quoted in S. John x. 34. the Second Morning Lesson. The two chapters of the Proverbs of Solomon, taken as the First Lessons for the Day, contain the description of that Heavenly Wisdom which is figuratively said to have been with the LORD from the beginning as His Delight and Daughter, whom we are bid to win. The words of the Beloved Disciple are in John iii. 11. the Second Evening Lesson.

Twenty-fifth Sunday after Trinity.

THE SOUL-WINNERS.

If, wandering on Life's beaten road,
One spot, amid the verdant sod,
Should most attract our heart and eyes;
It is, where Love from man to man,
Its hallowed pilgrimage began,
Where we may offer our best sacrifice!

So truest still, and likest Him —
Who thought not shame nor grief to climb
That awful Mount of gloom and woe, —
Shall we be; if, in following far,
We strive upon our hearts to bear
The Cross of loving every soul below.

Winners of souls — how wise! who deem
Best of that road where mankind dream
The hand that scatters, poorest still;

And who, if e'er the pathway be
Arid and thirsty, faithful see
A budding tree of Life by every rill.

Therefore the needy ones they love,
As they are loved; and seek to prove
The promised power their Maker gave:
— Joyful if, by assiduous prayer
And love and faith, they haply tear
Some long-lost soul from its stone-covered grave;

Or feed, with kindly voice and hand,
Poor wanderers in a desert land
With bread and word and softest care;
And, thoughtful that the tenderest grace
Lose not by disregard its place,
Teach them to gather up the fragments there.

They faint not in their glad endeavor
Of giving and forgiving, ever;
Their perfect Love doth cast out Fear,
While through the veil that thickly shrouds
What shall be, amid glowing clouds,
They see the Coming of their Saviour, near!

Twenty-sixth Sunday after Trinity.

THE HEART KNOWETH ITS OWN BITTERNESS.

The dimpling smile on Beauty's cheek,
The brow so calm and fair,
Pledge not within the peace we seek,
— Hide not its secret there.

And so, amid some pageant high,
Some hour of glorious sheen,
The form elate, the flashing eye
Mask woful hearts, I ween!

No age, no rank, no toil, no love
Evades this destiny;
But each created heart must prove
Its lonely malady.

The tender infant sobs amid
The mother's soft caress;
And stalwart manhood's face is hid
In silent bitterness.

No heart can, to another's grief,
Vibrate in full, true tone —
No heart will bear to win relief,
Unveiling all its own!

Nor does the sparkling flush of joy
Glow in reflected beam;
It wakes in each one's own employ,
Or lives in each one's dream.

We meet its gleam, in one we love,
With constant, ready smile;
But how so little can so move,
Wonder, perchance, the while.

For ever since the Fall that drove
Man out from Paradise,
In vain our sympathetic love
To be responsive, tries!

At best it is but half in tune,
— A weak and shattered Harp,
Athwart whose harmonies are strewn
Wild discords, harsh and sharp.

Lord, only Thou canst mark and feel
Each wavering note, each sigh
And tones that, half-unconscious, steal
From burdened hearts, on high!

Happy, whose burden thither borne
Grows light as it ascends;
Till music from all hearts forlorn,
Harmoniously blends;—

Till sicknesses of Hope deferred,
Touched gently by Thee, close;—
Till wishes, that each stray wind stirred,
Now motionless repose!

Twenty-seventh Sunday after Trinity.

A LITTLE WHILE.

A little while!
— Ah, how much hangs upon it,
Of hasty joys, hopes killed, and sudden strife,
And footholds lost upon the bridge of Life,
And fruit found ashes just when we had won it
By force or guile!

A little while, —
In funeral darkness lying,
We, too, are counted among things that were;
Yet ghosts of all our actions haunt us there,
Like spectral-fires, at night-fall oft seen flying
Round some old pile.

O, reconcile
Our souls to Thee, Redeemer!
So, in that gloomy hour we may but find
The burdens of our life-time left behind,
And feel that Thou dost hold us, spite our tremor,
Safe all the while!

Valete.

THE STRAIN HAS CEASED; AND MANY AN EVE,
SINCE IT WAS SUNG, HAS STOLEN NIGH
THE ELM, WHERE FANCIES CAME TO WEAVE
THEIR RUDE, UNLABORED TAPESTRY;
SO LONG AGO, THAT EVEN I
— THE DREAMER THERE — BUT HALF-REMEMBER
EACH SHADE ONCE KNOWN, AND LINGERINGLY
HANG O'ER IT NOW, AS O'ER SOME EMBER
OF CHERISHED FIRES; OR START AT FINDING
SOME TRACE THAT FRIGHTENS IN REMINDING,
LIKE ONE'S OLD FOOT-PRINTS ON THE BEACH,
THE WASTING TIDE HAS FAILED TO REACH.

O STEALING EVE, O HAUNTED TREE,
WOULD YE HAD BORNE OR LESS OR MORE TO ME!

LIBRARY OF CONGRESS
0 015 785 244 9